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CAN GRANDE'S CASTLE

AMY LOWELL

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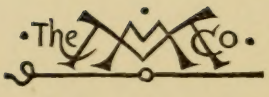

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CAN GRANDE'S CASTLE

BY

AMY LOWELL

AUTHOR OF

"SWORD BLADES AND POPPY SEED,"
"MEN, WOMEN, AND GHOSTS,"
"TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY," ETC.

New York

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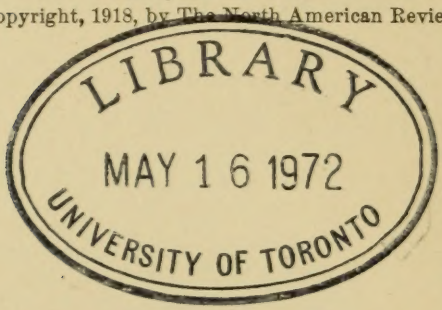

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I turn the page and read . . .

. . . . .

The heavy musty air, the black desks,

The bent heads and the rustling noises

In the great dome

Vanish . . .

And

The sun hangs in the cobalt-blue sky,

The boat drifts over the lake shallows,

The fishes skim like umber shades through the undulating weeds,

The oleanders drop their rosy petals on the lawns,

And the swallows dive and swirl and whistle

About the cleft battlements of Can Grande's castle . . ."

Richard Aldington. "At the British Museum."

PREFACE

THE four poems in this book are more closely related to one another than may at first appear. They all owe their existence to the war, for I suppose that, had there been no war, I should never have thought of them. They are scarcely war poems, in the strict sense of the word, nor are they allegories in which the present is made to masquerade as the past. Rather, they are the result of a vision thrown suddenly back upon remote events to explain a strange and terrible reality. "Explain" is hardly the word, for to explain the subtle causes which force men, once in so often, to attempt to break the civilization they have been at pains to rear, and so oblige other, saner, men to oppose them, is scarcely the province of poetry. Poetry works more deviously, but perhaps not less conclusively.

It has frequently been asserted that an artist lives apart, that he must withdraw himself from events and be somehow above and beyond them. To a certain degree this is true, as withdrawal is usually an inherent quality of his nature, but to seek such a withdrawal is both ridiculous and frustrating. For an artist to shut himself up in the proverbial "ivory tower" and never look out of the window is merely a tacit admission that it is his ancestors, not he, who possess the faculty of creation. This is the real decadence: to see through the eyes of dead men. Yet to-day can never be adequately expressed, largely because we are a part of it and only a part. For that reason one is flung backwards to a time which is not thrown out of proportion by any personal experience, and which on that very account lies extended in something like its proper perspective.

Circumstances beget an interest in like cir-

cumstances, and a poet, suddenly finding himself in the midst of war, turns naturally to the experiences of other men in other wars. He discovers something which has always hitherto struck him as preposterous, that life goes on in spite of war. That war itself is an expression of life, a barbaric expression on one side calling for an heroic expression on the other. It is as if a door in his brain crashed open and he looked into a distance of which he had heard but never before seen. History has become life, and he stands aghast and exhilarated before it.

That is why I have chosen Mr. Aldington's poem as a motto to this book. For it is obvious that I cannot have experienced what I have here written. I must have got it from books. But, living now, in the midst of events greater than these, the books have become reality to me in a way that they never could have become before, and the stories I have

dug out of dusty volumes seem as actual as my own existence. I hope that a little of this vividness may have got into the poems themselves, and so may reach my readers. Perhaps it has been an impossible task, I can only say that I was compelled to attempt it.

The poems are written in "polyphonic prose," a form which has proved a stumbling-block to many people. "Polyphonic prose" is perhaps a misleading title, as it tends to make the layman think that this is a prose form. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The word "prose" in its title simply refers to the manner in which the words are printed; "polyphonic" — many-voiced — giving the real key. "Polyphonic prose" is the freest, the most elastic, of all forms, for it follows at will any, and all, of the rules which guide other forms. Metrical verse has one set of laws, cadenced verse another; "polyphonic prose" can go from one to the other in the same poem with

no sense of incongruity. Its only touchstone is the taste and feeling of its author.

Yet, like all other artistic forms, it has certain fundamental principles, and the chief of these is an insistence on the absolute adequacy of the manner of a passage to the thought it embodies. Taste is therefore its determining factor; taste and a rhythmic ear.

In the preface to "Sword Blades and Poppy Seed," I stated that I had found the idea of the form in the works of the French poet, M. Paul Fort. But in adapting it for use in English I was obliged to make so many changes that it may now be considered as practically a new form. The greatest of these changes was in the matter of rhythm. M. Fort's practice consists, almost entirely, of regular verse passages interspersed with regular prose passages. But a hint in one of his poems led me to believe that a closer blending of the two types was desirable, and here

at the very outset I met with a difficulty. Every form of art must have a base; to depart satisfactorily from a rhythm it is first necessary to have it. M. Fort found this basic rhythm in the alexandrine. But the rhythm of the alexandrine is not one of the basic rhythms to an English ear. Altered from syllables to accent, it becomes light, even frivolous, in texture. There appeared to be only one basic rhythm for English serious verse: iambic pentameter, which, either rhymed as in the "heroic couplet" or unrhymed as in "blank verse," seems the chief foundation of English metre. It is so heavy and so marked, however, that it is a difficult rhythm to depart from and go back to; therefore I at once discarded it for my purpose.

Putting aside one rhythm of English prosody after another, I finally decided to base my form upon the long, flowing cadence of oratorical prose. The variations permitted to

this cadence enable the poet to change the more readily into those of *vers libre*, or even to take the regular beat of metre, should such a marked time seem advisable. It is, of course, important that such changes should appear as not only adequate but necessary when the poem is read aloud. And so I have found it. However puzzled a reader may be in trying to apprehend with the eye a prose which is certainly not prose, I have never noticed that an audience experiences the slightest confusion in hearing a "polyphonic prose" poem read aloud. I admit that the typographical arrangement of this form is far from perfect, but I have not as yet been able to hit upon a better. As all printing is a mere matter of convention, however, I hope that people will soon learn to read it with no more difficulty than a musician knows in reading a musical score.

So much for the vexed question of rhythm. Others of the many voices of "polyphonic

prose" are rhyme, assonance, alliteration, and return. Rhyme is employed to give a richness of effect, to heighten the musical feeling of a passage, but it is employed in a different way from that usual in metrical verse. For, although the poet may, indeed must, employ rhyme, it is not done always, nor, for the most part, regularly. In other words, the rhymes should seldom come at the ends of the cadences, unless such an effect be especially desired. This use of rhyme has been another difficulty to readers. Seeing rhymes, their minds have been compelled by their seeming strangeness to pull them, Jack-Horner-like, out of the text and unduly notice them, to the detriment of the passage in which they are embedded. Hearing them read without stress, they pass unobserved, merely adding their quota of tonal colour to the whole.

Return in "polyphonic prose" is usually achieved by the recurrence of a dominant

thought or image, coming in irregularly and in varying words, but still giving the spherical effect which I have frequently spoken of as imperative in all poetry.

It will be seen, therefore, that "polyphonic prose" is, in a sense, an orchestral form. Its tone is not merely single and melodic as is that of *vers libre*, for instance, but contrapuntal and various. I have analyzed it here with some care because, as all the poems in this volume are written in it, some knowledge of how to approach it is necessary if one is to understand them. I trust, however, that my readers will speedily forget matters of technique on turning to the poems themselves.

One thing more I wish to say in regard to "Guns as Keys: and the Great Gate Swings." I should be exceedingly sorry if any part of this poem were misunderstood, and so construed into an expression of discourtesy toward Japan. No such idea entered my mind in

writing it; in fact, the Japanese sections in the first part were intended to convey quite the opposite meaning. I wanted to place in juxtaposition the delicacy and artistic clarity of Japan and the artistic ignorance and gallant self-confidence of America. Of course, each country must be supposed to have the faults of its virtues; if, therefore, I have also opposed Oriental craft to Occidental bluff, I must beg indulgence.

I have tried to give a picture of two races at a moment when they were brought in contact for the first time. Which of them has gained most by this meeting, it would be difficult to say. The two episodes in the "Postlude" are facts, but they can hardly epitomize the whole truth. Still they are striking, occurring as they did in the same year. I owe the scene of the drowning of the young student in the Kegon waterfall to the paper "Young Japan," by Seichi Naruse, which appeared in the

"Seven Arts" for April, 1917. The inscription on the tree I have copied word for word from Mr. Naruse's translation, and I wish here to express my thanks, not for his permission (as with a perfect disregard of morals, I never asked it), but for his beautiful rendering of the original Japanese. I trust that my appreciation will exonerate my theft.

AMY LOWELL.

BROOKLINE, MASS.
MAY 24, 1918.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Sea-Blue and Blood-Red	1
Guns as Keys: and the Great Gate Swings .	47
Hedge Island	99
The Bronze Horses	121

Thanks are due to the editor of *The North American Review* for permission to reprint "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" and "Hedge Island," and to the editor of *The Seven Arts* for a like permission in regard to "Guns as Keys: and the Great Gate Swings."

SEA-BLUE AND BLOOD-RED

SEA-BLUE AND BLOOD-RED

I

The Mediterranean

Blue as the tip of a salvia blossom, the inverted cup of the sky arches over the sea. Up to meet it, in a flat band of glaring colour, rises the water. The sky is unspecked by clouds, but the sea is flecked with pink and white light shadows, and silver scintillations snip-snap over the tops of the waves.

Something moves along the horizon. A puff of wind blowing up the edges of the silver-blue sky? Clouds! Clouds! Great thunderheads marching along the skyline! No, by Jove! The sun shining on sails! Vessels, hull down, with only their tiers of canvas showing. Beautiful ballooning thunderheads dipping one after another below the blue band of the sea.

II

Naples

Red tiles, yellow stucco, layer on layer of windows, roofs, and balconies, Naples pushes up the hill away from the curving bay. A red, half-closed eye, Vesuvius watches and waits. All Naples prates of this and that, and runs about its little business, shouting, bawling, incessantly calling its wares. Fish frying, macaroni drying, seven feet piles of red and white brocoli, grapes heaped high with rosemary, sliced pomegranates dripping seeds, plucked and bleeding chickens, figs on spits, lemons in baskets, melons cut and quartered nicely, "*Ah, che bella cosa!*" They even sell water, clear crystal water for a *paul* or two. And everything done to a hullabaloo. They jabber over cheese, they chatter over wine, they gabble at the corners in the bright sunshine. And piercing through the noise is the beggar-

whine, always, like an undertone, the beggar-whine; and always the crimson, watching eye of Vesuvius.

Have you seen her — the Ambassadress? Ah, *Bellissima Creatura! Una Donna Rara!* She is fairer than the Blessed Virgin; and good! Never was such a soul in such a body! The rôle of her benefactions would stretch from here to Posilipo. And she loves the people, loves to go among them and speak to this one and that, and her apple-blossom face under the big blue hat works miracles like the Holy Images in the Churches.

In her great house with the red marble stairway, Lady Hamilton holds brilliant sway. From her boudoir windows she can see the bay, and on the left, hanging there, a flame in a cresset, the blood-red glare of Vesuvius staring at the clear blue air.

Blood-red on a night of stars, red like a wound, with lava scars. In the round wall-mirrors of her

boudoir, is the blackness of the bay, the whiteness of a star, and the bleeding redness of the mountain's core. Nothing more. All night long, in the mirrors, nothing more. Black water, red stain, and above, a star with its silver rain.

Over the people, over the king, trip the little Ambassadorial feet; fleet and light as a pigeon's wing, they brush over the artists, the friars, the *abbés*, the Court. They bear her higher and higher at each step. Up and over the hearts of Naples goes the beautiful Lady Hamilton till she reaches even to the Queen; then rests in a sheening, shimmering altitude, between earth and sky, high and floating as the red crater of Vesuvius. Buoyed up and sustained in a blood-red destiny, all on fire for the world to see.

Proud Lady Hamilton! Superb Lady Hamilton!

Quivering, blood-swept, vivid Lady Hamilton! Your vigour is enough to awake the dead, as you tread the newly uncovered courtyards of Pompeii. There is a murmur all over the opera house when you enter your box. And your frocks! Jesu! What frocks! "India painting on wyte sattin!" And a new camlet shawl, all sea-blue and blood-red, in an intricate pattern, given by Sir William to help you do your marvellous "Attitudes." Incomparable actress! No theatre built is big enough to compass you. It takes a world; and centuries shall elbow each other aside to watch you act your part. Art, Emma, or heart?

The blood-red cone of Vesuvius glows in the night.

She sings "*Luce Bella*," and Naples cries "*Brava! Ancora!*" and claps its hands. She dances the tarantella, and poses before a screen with the red-blue shawl. It is the frescoes of Pompeii unfrozen;

it is the fine-cut profiles of Sicilian coins; it is Apollo Belvedere himself — Goethe has said it. She wears a Turkish dress, and her face is sweet and lively as rippled water.

The lava-streams of Vesuvius descend as far as Portici. She climbs the peak of fire at midnight — five miles of flame. A blood-red mountain, seeping tears of blood. She skips over glowing ashes and laughs at the pale, faded moon, wan in the light of the red-hot lava. What a night! Spires and sparks of livid flame shooting into the black sky. Blood-red smears of fire; blood-red gashes, flashing her out against the smouldering mountain. A tossing fountain of blood-red jets, it sets her hair flicking into the air like licking flamelets of a burning aureole. Blood-red is everywhere. She wears it as a halo and diadem. Emma, Emma Hamilton, Ambassadress of Great Britain to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

III

Aboukir Bay, Egypt

North-north-west, and a whole-sail breeze, ruffling up the larkspur-blue sea, breaking the tops of the waves into egg-white foam, shoving ripple after ripple of pale jade-green over the shoals of Aboukir Bay. Away to the East rolls in the sluggish water of old Nile. West and South — hot, yellow land. Ships at anchor. Thirteen ships flying the *tricolore*, and riding at ease in a patch of blue water inside a jade-green hem. What of them? Ah, fine ships! The *Orient*, one hundred and twenty guns, *Franklin*, *Tonnant*, each with eighty. Weighty metal to float on a patch of blue with a green hem. They ride stem to stern, in a long line, pointing the way to Aboukir Bay.

To the North are thunderheads, ballooning silver-white thunderheads rising up out of the horizon.

The thunderheads draw steadily up into the blue-blossomed sky. A topgallant breeze pushes them rapidly over the white-specked water. One, two, six, ten, thirteen separate tiered clouds, and the wind sings loud in their shrouds and spars. The royals are furled, but the topgallantsails and topsails are full and straining. Thirteen white thunderheads bearing down on Aboukir Bay.

The Admiral is working the stump of his right arm; do not cross his hawse, I advise you.

"Youngster to the mast-head. What! Going without your glass, and be damned to you! Let me know what you see, immediately."

"The enemy fleet, Sir, at anchor in the bay."

"Bend on the signal to form in line of battle, Sir Ed'ard."

The bright wind straightens the signal pennants until they stand out rigid like boards.

"Captain Hood reports eleven fathoms, Sir, and shall he bear up and sound?"

"Signal Captain Hood to lead, sounding."

"By the mark ten! A quarter less nine! By the deep eight!"

Round to starboard swing the white thunderheads, the water of their bows washing over the green jade hem. An orange sunset steams in the shrouds, and glints upon the muzzles of the cannon in the open ports. The hammocks are down; the guns run out and primed; beside each is a pile of canister and grape; gunners are blowing on their matches; snatches of fife music drift down to the lower decks. In the cockpits, the surgeons are feeling the edges of knives and saws; men think of their wives and swear softly, spitting on their hands.

"Let go that anchor! By God, she hangs!"

Past the *Guerrier* slides the *Goliath*, but the anchor

drops and stops her on the inner quarter of the *Conquérant*. The *Zealous* brings up on the bow of the *Guerrier*, the *Orion*, *Theseus*, *Audacious*, are all come to, inside the French ships.

The *Vanguard*, Admiral's pennant flying, is lying outside the *Spartiate*, distant only a pistol shot.

In a pattern like a country dance, each balanced justly by its neighbour, lightly, with no apparent labour, the ships slip into place, and lace a design of white sails and yellow yards on the purple, flowing water. Almighty Providence, what a day! Twenty-three ships in one small bay, and away to the Eastward, the water of old Nile rolling sluggishly between its sand-bars.

Seven hundred and forty guns open fire on the French fleet. The sun sinks into the purple-red water, its low, straight light playing gold on the slaughter. Yellow fire, shot with red, in wheat

sheafs from the guns; and a racket and ripping which jerks the nerves, then stuns, until another broadside crashes the ears alive again. The men shine with soot and sweat, and slip in the blood which wets the deck.

The surgeons cut and cut, but men die steadily. It is heady work, this firing into ships not fifty feet distant. Lilac and grey, the heaving bay, slapped and torn by thousands of splashings of shot and spars. Great red stars peer through the smoke, a mast is broke short off at the lashings and falls overboard, with the rising moon flashing in its top-hamper.

There is a rattle of musketry; pipe-clayed, red-coated marines swab, and fire, and swab. A round shot finishes the job, and tears its way out through splintering bulwarks. The roar of broadside after broadside echoes from the shore in a long, hoarse

humming. Drums beat a little fire-cracker rap-pings, and a boatswain's whistle wires, thin and sharp, through the din, and breaks short off against the scream of a gun crew, cut to bits by a bursting cannon.

Three times they clear the Hazard's guns of a ruck of corpses, but each new crew comes on with a cheer and each discharge is a jet of crimson.

The admiral is hit. A flying sliver of iron has skinned his head and opened it, the skin flapping over his one good eye. He sees red, blood-red, and the roar of the guns sounds like water running over stones. He has to be led below.

Eight bells, and the poop of the Ocean is on fire. "Higher, men, train your guns a little higher. Don't give them a loophole to switch the flame. 'Tis their own fine paint they'll have to blame." Yellow and red, waving tiger-lilies, the flames shoot up — round.

serrated petals, flung out of the black-and-silver cup of the bay. Each stay is wound with a flickering fringe. The ropes curl up and shrivel as though a twinge of pain withered them. Spasm after spasm convulses the ship. A Clap!—A Crash!—A Boom!—and silence. The ships have ceased firing.

Ten, twenty, forty seconds . . .

Then a dash of water as masts and spars fall from an immense height, and in the room of the floating, licking tiger-lily is a chasm of yellow and red whirling eddies. The guns start firing again.

Foot after foot across the sky goes the moon, with her train of swirling silver-blue stars.

The day is fair. In the clear Egyptian air, the water of Aboukir Bay is as blue as the bottom flowers of a larkspur spray. The shoals are green with a white metal sheen, and between its sand-bars the Nile can be seen, slowly rolling out to sea.

The Admiral's head is bound up, and his eye is bloodshot and very red, but he is sitting at his desk writing, for all that. Through the stern windows is the blue of the sea, and reflections dance waveringly on his paper. This is what he has written:

"VANGUARD. MOUTH OF THE NILE.
August 8th, 1798.

MY DEAR SIR —

Almighty God has made me the happy instrument in destroying the enemy's fleet; which, I hope, will be a blessing to Europe . . . I hope there will be no difficulty in our getting refitted at Naples . . .

Your most obliged and affectionate
HORATIO NELSON."

Dance, little reflections of blue water, dance, while there is yet time.

IV

Naples

"Get out of the way, with your skewbald ass. Heu! Heu!" There is scant room for the quality to pass up and down the whole Strada di Toledo. Such a running to and fro! Such a clacking, and clapping, and fleering, and cheering. Holy Mother of God, the town has gone mad. Listen to the bells. They will crack the very doors of Heaven with their jangling. The sky seems the hot half-hollow of a clanging bell. I verily believe they will rock the steeples off their foundations. Ding! *Dang!* Dong! Jingle-Jingle! Clank! Clink! Twitter! Tingle! Half Naples is hanging on the ropes, I vow it is louder than when they crown the Pope. The lapis-lazuli pillars in Jesus Church positively lurch with the noise; the carvings of Santa Chiara are at swinging poise. In San Domenico Maggiore, the altar

quivers; Santa Maria del Carmine's chimes run like rivers tinkling over stones; the big bell of the Cathedral hammers and drones. It is gay to-day, with all the bells of Naples at play.

That's a fine equipage; those bays shine like satin. Why, it is the British Ambassadress, and two British officers with her in the carriage! Where is her hat? Tut, you fool, she doesn't need one, she is wearing a ribbon like a Roman senator. Blue it is, and there are gold letters: "Nelson and Victory." The woman is undoubtedly mad, but it is a madness which kindles. "*Viva Nelson! Viva Miladi!*" Half a hundred hats are flying in the air like kites, and all the white handkerchiefs in Naples wave from the balconies.

Brava, Emma Hamilton, a fig for the laws of good taste, your heart beats blood, not water. Let pale-livered ladies wave decorously; do you drive the streets and tell the *lazzaroni* the good news. Proud Lady Hamilton! Mad, whole-hearted Lady Hamil-

ton! *Viva! Viva ancora!* Wear your Nelson-anchor earrings for the sun to flash in; cut a dash in your new blue shawl, spotted with these same anchors. What if lily-tongued dandies dip their pens in gall to jeer at you, your blood is alive. The red of it stains a bright band across the pages of history. The others are ghosts, rotting in aged tombs. Light your three thousand lamps, that your windows spark and twinkle "Nelson" for all the world to see, and even the little wavelets of the bay have a largess of gold petals dropped from his name. Rule, Britannia, though she doesn't deserve it; it is all Nelson and the Ambassadress, in the streets of Naples.

He has rooms at the Palazzo Sesso, the British Admiral, and all day long he watches the red, half-closed eye of Vesuvius gazing down at his riding ships. At night, there is a red plume over the moun-

tain, and the light of it fills the room with a crimson glow, it might be a gala lit for him. His eyes swim. In the open sky hangs a steel-white star, and a bar of silver cuts through the red reflections of the mirrors. Red and silver, for the bay is not blue at night.

"Oh brave Nelson, oh God bless and protect our brave deliverer, oh, Nelson, Nelson, what do we not owe to you." Sea-blue, the warp; but the thread of the woof is bolted red. Fiddlers and dinners — Well, or Hell! as the case may be. Queens, populace — these are things, like guns, to face. Rostral Columns and birthday fêtes jar the nerves of a wounded head; it is better in bed, in the rosy gloom of a plume-lit room.

So the Admiral rests in the Palazzo Sesso, the guest of his Ambassador, and his ships ride at anchor under the flaming mountain.

The shuttle shoots, the shuttle weaves. The red thread to the blue thread cleaves. The web is plaiting which nothing unreaves.

The Admiral buys the Ambassadress a table, a pleasant tribute to hospitality. It is of satin-wood, sprinkled over with little flying loves arrayed in pink and blue sashes. They sit at this table for hours, he and she, discussing the destiny of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and her voice is like water tinkling over stones, and her face is like the same water twinkling in shallows.

She counts his money for him, and laughs at his inability to reduce *carolins* to English sixpences. She drives him out to Caserta to see the Queen, and parades him on the Chiaia to delight the common people. She is always before him, a mist of rose and silver, a damask irradiation, shading and lighting like a palpitant gem.

In the evenings, by the light of two wax candles, the Admiral writes kind acknowledgements to the tributes of half a world. Moslem and Christian sweetly united to stamp out liberty. It is an inspiring sight to see. Rule Britannia indeed, with Slavs and Turks boosting up her footstool. The Sultan has sent a Special Envoy bearing gifts: the *Chelenck* — "Plume of Triumph," all in diamonds, and a pelisse of sables, just as bonds of his eternal gratitude. "*Viva il Turco!*" says Lady Hamilton. The Mother of His Sultanic Majesty begs that the Admiral's pocket may be the repository of a diamond-studded box to hold his snuff. The Russian Tzar, a bit self-centred as most monarchs are, sends him his portrait, diamond-framed of course. The King of Sardinia glosses over his fewer gems by the richness of his compliments. The East India Company, secure of its trade, has paid him ten thousand pounds.

The Turkish Company has given him plate. A grateful country augments his state by creating him the smallest kind of peer, with a couple of tuppences a year, and veneering it over by a grant of arms. Arms for an arm, but what for an eye! Does the Admiral smile as he writes his reply? Writes with his left hand that he is aware of the high honour it will be to bear this shield: "A chief undulated argent, from which a palm-tree issuant, between a disabled ship on the dexter, and a ruinous battery on the sinister, all proper." "Very proper, indeed," nods Sir William, but Lady Hamilton prods the coloured paper shield a trifle scornfully. "If I was King of England, I would make you Duke Nelson, Marquis Nile, Earl Aboukir, Viscount Pyramid, Baron Crocodile and Prince Victory." "My dear Emma, what a child you are," says Sir William, but the Admiral looks out of the window at the blood-red mountain and says nothing at all.

Something shakes Naples. Shakes so violently that it makes the candles on the Admiral's writing-table flicker. Earthquakes, perhaps. Aye, earthquakes, but not from the red, plumed mountain. The dreadful tread of marching men is rocking the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and the *fanfare* of Republican trumpets blows over the city like a great wind. It swirls the dust of Monarchy in front of it, across Naples and out over the Chiaia to the sea.

The Admiral walks his quarter-deck with the blue bay beneath him, but his eyes are red with the glare of Vesuvius, and the blood beats in and out of his heart so rapidly that he is almost stifled. All Naples is red to the Admiral, but the core of crimson is the Palazzo Sesso, in whose windows, at night, the silver stars flash so brightly. "Crimson and silver," thinks the Admiral, "O Emma, Emma Hamilton!"

It is December now, and Naples is heaving and shuddering with the force of the Earth shock. There is no firm ground on which to stand. Beneath the Queen's footsteps is a rocking jelly. Even the water of the bay boils and churns and knocks loudly against the wooden sides of the British ships.

Over the satin-wood table, the Admiral and the Ambassadress sit in consultation, and red fire flares between them across its polished surface. "My adorable, unfortunate Queen! Dear, dear Queen!" Lady Hamilton's eyes are carbuncles burning into the Admiral's soul. He is dazzled, confused, used to the glare on blue water he thinks he sees it now. It is Duty and Kings. Caste versus riff-raff. The roast-beef of old England against fried frogs' legs.

Red, blood-red, figures the weaving pattern, red blushing over blue, flushing the fabric purple, like lees of wine.

A blustering night to go to a party. But the coach is ready, and Lord Nelson is arrived from his ship. Official persons cannot give the slip to other official persons, and it is Kelim Effendi who gives the reception, the Sultan's Special Envoy. "Wait," to the coachman; then lights, jewels, sword-clickings, compliments, a promenade round the rooms, bowing, and a quick, unwatched exit from a side door. Someone will wake the snoring coachman hours hence and send him away. But it will not be his Master or Mistress. These hurry through dark, windy streets to the Molesiglio. How the waves flow by in the darkness! "A heavy ground-swell," says the Admiral, but there is a lull in the wind. A password in English — we are all very English to-night. "Can you find your way, Emma?" Sir William is perturbed. But the Ambassadress is gone, gone lightly, swiftly, up the dark mole and

disappeared through a postern in the wall. She is aflame, scorching with red and gold fires, a torch of scarlet and ochre, a meteor of sulphur and chrome dashed with vermilion.

There are massacres in the streets of Naples; in the Palace, a cowering Queen. This is melodrama, and Emma is the Princess of Opera Bouffe. Opera Bouffe, with Death as Pulchinello. Ho! Ho! You laugh. A merry fellow, and how if Death had you by the gizzard? Comedy and Tragedy shift masks, but Emma is intent on her task and sees neither. Frightened, vacillating monarchs to guide down a twisting stair; but there is Nelson climbing up. And there are lanterns, cutlasses, pistols, and, at last, the night air, black slapping water, and boats.

They are afloat, off the trembling, quivering soil of Naples, and their way is lit by a blood-red glimmer from the tossing fires of Vesuvius.

V

Palermo, et al.

Storm-tossed water, and an island set in a sea as blue as the bottom flowers of a spike of larkspur, come upon out of a hurly-burly of wind, and rain, and jagged waves. Through it all has walked the Ambassadress like some starry saint, pouring mercy out of full hands. The Admiral sees her misted with rose and purple, radiating comfort in a phosphoric glow. Is it wise to light one's life with an iridescence? Perhaps not, but the bolt is shot.

The stuff is weaving. Now one thread is uppermost, now another, making striæ of reds and blues, or clouding colour over colour.

There are lemon groves, and cool stars, and love flooding beneath them. There are slanting decks, and full sails, and telescopes, wearying to a one-eyed

man. Then a span of sunlight under pink oleanders; and evenings beneath painted ceilings, surrounded by the hum of a court.

Naples again, with cannon blazing. A haze of orders, documents, pardons, and a hanging. Palermo, and Dukedoms and "*Nostro Liberatore.*" One cannot see everything with one eye. Flight is possible, but misted vision shows strange shapes. It is Opera Bouffe, with Tragedy in the front row. Downing Street hints reproof, mentions stories of gaming-tables and high piles of gold. What nonsense to talk of a duel! Sir William and the Admiral live like brothers. But they will not be silent, those others. "Poor Lady Nelson, what will she do?" Still it is true that the lady in question is a bit of a shrew.

Blood beats back and forth under the lemon groves, proving itself a right of way. "I worship, nay, adore you, and if you was single, and I found

you under a hedge, I would instantly marry you. Santa Emma! As truly as I believe in God, do I believe you are a saint." If the lady is a saint and he her acolyte, it is by a Divine right. These are the ways of Heaven; the Admiral prays and knows himself forgiven and absolved.

Revolve slowly, shuttle of the blue thread, red is a strong colour under Sicilian skies.

VI

Leghorn to London

A Court, an Ambassador, and a great Admiral, in travelling carriages rolling over the map of Europe. Straining up hills, bowling along levels, rolling down slopes, and all to the tune of "Hip! Hip! Hurrah!" From Leghorn to Florence, to Ancona, to Trieste, is one long *Festa*. Every steeple sways with clashing bells, and people line the roads, yelling "*Viva Nelson! Hola! Hola! Viva Inghilterra!*" Wherever

they go, it is a triumphal progress and a pinny-pinny-poppy-show. Whips crack, sparks fly, sails fill — another section of the map is left behind. Carriages again, up hill and down, from the seaboard straight into Austria.

Hip! Hip! Hip! The wheels roll into Vienna. Then what a to-do! Concerts, Operas, Fireworks too. Dinners where one hundred six-foot grenadiers do the waiting at table. Such grandiloquence! Such splendid, regal magnificence! Trumpets and cannons, and Nelson's health; the Jew wealth of Baron Arnstein, and the excellent wine of his cellars. Haydn conducts an oratorio while the guests are playing faro. Delightful city! What a pity one must leave! These are rewards worthy of the Battle of the Nile. You smile. Tut! Tut! Remember they are only foreigners; the true British breed writes home scurvy letters for all London to read. Hip! Hip! God save the King!

For two months, the travelling carriages stand in the stables; but horses are put to them at last, and they are off again. No Court this time; but what is a fleeing Queen to a victorious Admiral! Up hill, down dale, round and round roll the sparkling wheels, kicking up all the big and little stones of Austria. "Huzza for the Victor of Aboukir!" shouts the populace. The traces tighten, and the carriages are gone. In and out of Prague roll the wheels, and across the border into Germany.

Dresden at last, but an Electress turning her back on Lady Hamilton. A stuffy state, with a fussy etiquette! Why distress oneself for such a rebuff? Emma will get even with them yet. It is enough for her to do her "Attitudes," and to perfection. And still — and still — But Lady Hamilton has an iron will.

Proud Lady Hamilton! Blood-betrayed, hot-hearted Lady Hamilton! The wheels roll out of Dresden, and Lady Hamilton looks at the Admiral. "Oh, Nelson, Nelson." But the whips are cracking and one cannot hear.

Roll over Germany, wheels. Roll through Magdeburg, Lodwostz, Anhalt. Roll up to the banks of the Elbe, and deposit your travellers in a boat once more. Along the green shores of the green-and-brown river to Hamburg, where merchants and bankers are waiting to honour the man who has saved their gold. Huzza for Nelson, Saviour of Banks! Where is the frigate a thankful country might have sent him? Not there. Why did he come overland, forsooth? The Lion and the Unicorn are uncouth beasts, but we do not mind in the least. No, indeed! We take a packet and land at Yarmouth.

"Hip! Hip! Hip! God save the King! Long live Nelson, Britain's Pride!" The common people are beside themselves with joy, there is no alloy to their welcome. Before *The Wrestler's* inn, troops are paraded. And every road is arcaded with flags and flowers. "He is ours! Hip! Hip! Nelson!" Cavalcades of volunteer cavalry march before him. Two days to London, and every road bordered with smiling faces. They cannot go faster than a footpace because the carriage is drawn by men. Muskets pop, and every shop in every town is a flutter of bunting.

Red, Lady Hamilton, red welcome for your Admiral. Red over foggy London. Bow bells peeling, and the crowded streets reeling through fast tears. Years, Emma, and Naples covered by their ashes.

Blood-red, his heart flashes to hers, but the great city of London is blurred to both of them.

VII

Merton

Early Autumn, and a light breeze rustling through the trees of Paradise Merton, and pashing the ripples of the Little Nile against the sides of the arched stone bridge. It is ten o'clock, and through the blowing leaves, the lighted windows of the house twinkle like red, pulsing stars. Far down the road is a jingle of harness, and a crunching of wheels. Out of the darkness flare the lamps of a post-chaise, blazing basilisk eyes, making the smooth sides of leaves shine, as they approach, the darkness swallowing in behind them. A rattle, a stamping of hoofs, and the chaise comes to a stand opposite a wooden gate. It is not late, maybe a bit ahead of time. The post-boy eases himself in the saddle, and loosens his reins. The light from the red windows glitters in the varnished panels of the chaise.

How tear himself away from so dear a home! Can he wrench himself apart, can he pull his heart out of his body? Her face is pitiful with tears. Two years gone, and only a fortnight returned. His head hums with the rushing of his blood. "Wife in the sight of Heaven" — surely one life between them now, and yet the summons has come. Blue water is calling, the peaked seas beckon.

The Admiral kneels beside his child's bed, and prays. These are the ways of the Almighty. "His will be done." Pathetic trust, thrusting aside desire. The fire on the hearth is faint and glowing, and throws long shadows across the room. How quiet it is, how far from battles and crowning seas.

She strains him in her arms, she whispers, sobbing, "Dearest husband of my heart, you are all

the world to Emma." She delays his going by minute and minute. "My Dearest and most Beloved, God protect you and my dear Horatia and grant us a happy meeting. Amen! Amen!"

Tear, blue shuttle, through the impeding red, but have a care lest the thread snap in following.

"God bless you, George. Take care of Lady Hamilton." He shakes his brother-in-law by the hand. The chaise door bangs. The post-boy flicks his whip, the horses start forward. Red windows through flecking trees. Blood-red windows growing dimmer behind him, until they are only a shimmer in the distance. His eyes smart, searching for their faint glimmer through blowing trees. His eyes smart with tears, and fears which seem to haunt him. All night he drives, through Guildford, over Hindhead, on his way to Portsmouth.

VIII

At Sea, off Cape Trafalgar

Blue as the tip of a deep blue salvia blossom, the inverted cup of the sky arches over the sea. Up to meet it, in a concave curve of bright colour, rises the water, flat, unrippled, for the wind scarcely stirs. How comes the sky so full of clouds on the horizon, with none over head? Clouds! Great clouds of canvas! Mighty ballooning clouds, bearing thunder and crinkled lightning in their folds. They roll up out of the horizon, tiered, stately. Sixty-four great thunder-clouds, more perhaps, throwing their shadows over ten miles of sea.

Boats dash back and forth. Their ordered oars sparkling like silver as they lift and fall. Frigate captains receiving instructions, coming aboard the

flagship, departing from it. Blue and white, with a silver flashing of boats.

Thirty-three clouds headed South, twenty-three others converging upon them! They move over the water as silently as the drifting air. Lines to lines, drawing nearer on the faint impulse of the breeze.

Blue coated, flashing with stars, the Admiral walks up and down the poop. Stars on his breast, in his eyes the white glare of the sea. The enemy wears, looping end to end, and waits, poised in a half-circle like a pale new moon upon the water. The British ships point straight to the hollow between the horns, and even their stu'nsails are set. Arrows flung at a crescent over smooth blue water.

"Now, Blackwood, I am going to amuse the fleet with a signal. Mr. Pasco, I wish to say to the fleet, 'England confides that every man will do his duty.' You must be quick, for I have one more to make, which is for close action."

"If your Lordship will permit me to substitute 'expects' for 'confides,' it will take less time, because 'expects' is in the vocabulary and 'confides' must be spelt."

Flutter flags, fling out your message to the advancing arrows. Ripple and fly over the Admiral's head. Signal flags are of all colours, but the Admiral sees only the red. It beats above him, outlined against the salvia-blue sky. A crimson blossom sprung from his heart, the banner royal of his Destiny struck out sharply against the blue of Heaven.

Frigate Captain Blackwood bids good-bye to the

Admiral. "I trust, my Lord, that on my return to the *Victory*, I shall find your Lordship well and in possession of twenty prizes." A gash of blood-colour cuts across the blue sky, or is it that the Admiral's eyes are tired with the flashing of the sea? "God bless you, Blackwood, I shall never speak to you again." What is it that haunts his mind? He is blinded by red, blood-red fading to rose, smeared purple, blotted out by blue. Larkspur sea and blue sky above it, with the flickering flags of his signal standing out in cameo.

Boom! A shot passes through the main top-gallantsail of the *Victory*. The ship is under fire. Her guns cannot bear while she is head on. Straight at the floating half-moon of ships goes the *Victory*, leading her line, muffled in the choking smoke of the *Bucentaure's* guns. The sun is dimmed, but through the smoke-cloud prick diamond sparkles from the Ad-

miral's stars as he walks up and down the quarter-deck.

Red glare of guns in the Admiral's eyes. Red stripe of marines drawn up on the poop. Eight are carried off by a single shot, and the red stripe liquefies, and seeps, lapping, down the gangway. Every stu'nsail boom is shot away. The blue of the sea has vanished; there is only the red of cannon, and the white twinkling sparks of the Admiral's stars.

The bows of the *Victory* cross the wake of the *Bucentaure*, and one after another, as they bear, the double-shotted guns tear through the woodwork of the French ship. The *Victory* slips past like a shooting shuttle, and runs on board the *Redoubtable*, seventy-four, and their spars lock, with a shock which almost stops their headway.

It is a glorious Autumn day outside the puff-ball of smoke. A still, blue sea, unruffled, banded to silver by a clear sun.

Guns of the *Victory*, guns of the *Redoubtable*, exploding incessantly, making one long draw of sound. Rattling upon it, rain on a tin roof, the pop-pop of muskets from the mizzen-top of the *Redoubtable*. There are sharpshooters in the mizzen-top, aiming at the fog below. Suddenly, through it, spears the gleam of diamonds; it is the Admiral's stars, reflecting the flashes of the guns.

Red blood in a flood before his eyes. Red from horizon to zenith, crushing down like beaten metal. The Admiral falls to his knees, to his side, and lies there, and the crimson glare closes over him, a cupped inexorable end. "They have done for me at last, Hardy. My back-bone is shot through."

The blue thread is snapped and the bolt falls from the loom. Weave, shuttle of the red thread. Weave over and under yourself in a scarlet ecstasy. It is

all red now he comes to die. Red, with the white sparkles of those cursed stars.

Carry him gently down, and let no man know that it is the Admiral who has fallen. He covers his face and his stars with his handkerchief. The white glitter is quenched; the white glitter of his life will shine no more. "Doctor, I am gone. I leave Lady Hamilton and my daughter Horatia as a legacy to my Country." Pathetic trust, thrusting aside knowledge. Flint, the men who sit in Parliament, flint which no knocking can spark to fire. But you still believe in men's goodness, knowing only your own heart. "Let my dear Lady Hamilton have my hair, and all other things belonging to me."

The red darkens, and is filled with tossing fires. He sees Vesuvius, and over it the single silver brilliance of a star.

"One would like to live a little longer, but thank God, I have done my duty."

Slower, slower, passes the red thread and stops. The weaving is done.

In the log-book of the *Victory*, it is written: "Partial firing continued until 4.30, when a victory having been reported to the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Nelson, K.B., he died of his wound."

IX

Calais

It is a timber-yard, pungent with the smell of wood: Oak, Pine, and Cedar. But under the piles of white boards, they say there are bones rotting. An old guide to Calais speaks of a wooden marker shaped like a battledoor, handle downwards, on the broad part of which was scratched: "Emma Hamil-

ton, England's Friend." It was a poor thing and now even that has gone. Let us buy an oak chip for remembrance. It will only cost a sou.

GUNS AS KEYS: AND THE GREAT GATE SWINGS

GUNS AS KEYS: AND THE GREAT GATE SWINGS

Part I

Due East, far West. Distant as the nests of the opposite winds. Removed as fire and water are, as the clouds and the roots of the hills, as the wills of youth and age. Let the key-guns be mounted, make a brave show of waging war, and pry off the lid of Pandora's box once more. Get in at any cost, and let out at little, so it seems, but wait — wait — there is much to follow through the Great Gate!

They do not see things in quite that way, on this bright November day, with sun flashing, and waves splashing, up and down Chesapeake Bay. On shore, all the papers are running to press with huge head-

lines: "Commodore Perry Sails." Dining-tables buzz with travellers' tales of old Japan culled from Dutch writers. But we are not like the Dutch. No shutting the stars and stripes up on an island. Pooh! We must trade wherever we have a mind. Naturally!

The wharves of Norfolk are falling behind, becoming smaller, confused with the warehouses and the trees. On the impetus of the strong South breeze, the paddle-wheel steam frigate, *Mississippi*, of the United States Navy, sails down the flashing bay. Sails away, and steams away, for her furnaces are burning, and her paddle-wheels turning, and all her sails are set and full. Pull, men, to the old chorus:

"A Yankee ship sails down the river,
Blow, boys, blow;
Her masts and spars they shine like silver,
Blow, my bully boys, blow."

But what is the use? That plaguy brass band blares out with "The Star Spangled Banner," and you cannot hear the men because of it. Which is a pity, thinks the Commodore, in his cabin, studying the map, and marking stepping-stones: Madeira, Cape Town, Mauritius, Singapore, nice firm stepping-places for seven-league boots. Flag-stones up and down a hemisphere.

My! How she throws the water off from her bows, and how those paddle-wheels churn her along at the rate of seven good knots! You are a proud lady, Mrs. *Mississippi*, curtseying down Chesapeake Bay, all a-flutter with red white and blue ribbons.

At Mishima in the Province of Kai,
Three men are trying to measure a pine tree
By the length of their outstretched arms.
Trying to span the bole of a huge pine tree
By the spread of their lifted arms.

Attempting to compress its girth
Within the limit of their extended arms.
Beyond, Fuji,
Majestic, inevitable,
Wreathed over by wisps of cloud.
The clouds draw about the mountain,
But there are gaps.
The men reach about the pine tree,
But their hands break apart;
The rough bark escapes their hand-clasps;
The tree is unencircled.
Three men are trying to measure the stem of a
gigantic pine tree,
With their arms,
At Mishima in the Province of Kai.

Furnaces are burning good Cumberland coal at the rate of twenty-six tons per diem, and the paddle-wheels turn round and round in an iris of spray.

She noses her way through a wallowing sea; foots it, bit by bit, over the slanting wave slopes; pants along, thrust forward by her breathing furnaces, urged ahead by the wind draft flattening against her taut sails.

The Commodore, leaning over the taffrail, sees the peak of Madeira sweep up out of the haze. The *Mississippi* glides into smooth water, and anchors under the lee of the "Desertas."

Ah! the purple bougainvilia! And the sweet smells of the heliotrope and geranium hedges! Ox-drawn sledges clattering over cobbles — what a fine pause in an endless voyaging. Stars and stripes demanding five hundred tons of coal, ten thousand gallons of water, resting for a moment on a round stepping-stone, with the drying sails slatting about in the warm wind.

"Get out your accordion, Jim, and give us the

'Suwannee River' to show those Dagoes what a tune is. Pipe up with the chorus, boys. Let her go."

The green water flows past Madeira. Flows under the paddle-boards, making them clip and clap. The green water washes along the sides of the Commodore's steam flagship and passes away to leeward.

"Hitch up your trowsers, Black Face, and do a horn-pipe. It's a fine quiet night for a double shuffle. Keep her going, Jim. Louder. That's the ticket. Gosh, but you can spin, Blackey!"

The road is hilly
Outside the Tiger Gate,
And striped with shadows from a bow moon
Slowly sinking to the horizon.
The roadway twinkles with the bobbing of paper
lanterns,
Melon-shaped, round, oblong,

Lighting the steps of those who pass along it;
And there is a sweet singing of many *semi*,
From the cages which an insect-seller
Carries on his back.

Westward of the Canaries, in a wind-blazing sea. Engineers, there, extinguish the furnaces; carpenters, quick, your screwdrivers and mallets, and unship the paddle-boards. Break out her sails, quartermasters, the wind will carry her faster than she can steam, for the trades have her now, and are whipping her along in fine clipper style. Key-guns, your muzzles shine like basalt above the tumbling waves. Polished basalt cameoed upon malachite. Yankee-doodle-dandy! A fine upstanding ship, clouded with canvas, slipping along like a trotting filly out of the Commodore's own stables. White sails and sailors, blue-coated officers, and red in a star sparked through the claret decanter on the Commodore's luncheon table.

The Commodore is writing to his wife, to be posted at the next stopping place. Two years is a long time to be upon the sea.

Nigi-oi of Matsuba-ya
Celebrated oiran,
Courtesan of unrivalled beauty,
The great silk mercer, Mitsui,
Counts himself a fortunate man
As he watches her parade in front of him
In her robes of glazed blue silk
Embroidered with singing nightingales.
He puffs his little silver pipe
And arranges a fold of her dress.
He parts it at the neck
And laughs when the falling plum-blossoms
Tickle her naked breasts.
The next morning he makes out a bill
To the Director of the Dutch Factory at Nagasaki

For three times the amount of the goods
Forwarded that day in two small junks
In the care of a trusted clerk.

The North-east trades have smoothed away into hot, blue doldrums. Paddle-wheels to the rescue. Thank God, we live in an age of invention. What air there is, is dead ahead. The deck is a bed of cinders, we wear a smoke cloud like a funeral plume. Funeral — of whom? Of the little heathens inside the Gate? Wait! Wait! These monkey-men have got to trade, Uncle Sam has laid his plans with care, see those black guns sizzling there. "It's deuced hot," says a lieutenant, "I wish I could look in at a hop in Newport this evening."

The one hundred and sixty streets in the Sanno
quarter
Are honey-gold,

Honey-gold from the gold-foil screens in the houses,
Honey-gold from the fresh yellow mats;
The lintels are draped with bright colours,
And from eaves and poles
Red and white paper lanterns
Glitter and swing.
Through the one hundred and sixty decorated
streets of the Sanno quarter,
Trails the procession,
With a bright slowness,
To the music of flutes and drums.
Great white sails of cotton
Belly out along the honey-gold streets.
Sword bearers,
Spear bearers,
Mask bearers,
Grinning masks of mountain genii,
And a white cock on a drum
Above a purple sheet.

Over the flower hats of the people,
Shines the sacred palanquin,
"Car of gentle motion,"
Upheld by fifty men,
Stalwart servants of the god,
Bending under the weight of mirror-black lacquer,
Of pillars and roof-tree
Wrapped in chased and gilded copper.
Portly silk tassels sway to the marching of feet,
Wreaths of gold and silver flowers
Shoot sudden scintillations at the gold-foil screens.
The golden phœnix on the roof of the palanquin
Spreads its wings,
And seems about to take flight
Over the one hundred and sixty streets
Straight into the white heart
Of the curved blue sky.
Six black oxen,
With white and red trappings,

Draw platforms on which are musicians, dancers,
actors,
Who posture and sing,
Dance and parade,
Up and down the honey-gold streets,
To the sweet playing of flutes,
And the ever-repeating beat of heavy drums,
To the constant banging of heavily beaten drums,
To the insistent repeating rhythm of beautiful
great drums.

Across the equator and panting down to Saint Helena, trailing smoke like a mourning veil. Jamestown jetty, and all the officers in the ship making at once for Longwood. Napoleon! Ah, tales — tales — with nobody to tell them. A bronze eagle caged by floating woodwork. A heart burst with beating on a flat drop-curtain of sea and sky. Nothing now but pigs in a sty. Pigs rooting in the Emperor's bed-

room. God be praised, we have a plumed smoking ship to take us away from this desolation.

"Boney was a warrior
Away-i-oh;
Boney was a warrior,
John François."

"Oh, shut up, Jack, you make me sick. Those pigs are like worms eating a corpse. Bah!"

The ladies,
Wistaria Blossom, Cloth-of-Silk, and Deep Snow,
With their ten attendants,
Are come to Asakusa
To gaze at peonies.
To admire crimson-carmine peonies,
To stare in admiration at bomb-shaped, white and sulphur peonies,
To caress with a soft finger
Single, rose-flat peonies,

Tight, incurved, red-edged peonies,
Spin-wheel circle, amaranth peonies.
To smell the acrid pungence of peony blooms,
And dream for months afterwards
Of the temple garden at Asakusa,
Where they walked together
Looking at peonies.

The Gate! The Gate! The far-shining Gate! Pat your guns and thank your stars you have not come too late. The Orient's a sleepy place, as all globe-trotters say. We'll get there soon enough, my lads, and carry it away. That's a good enough song to round the Cape with, and there's the Table Cloth on Table Mountain and we've drawn a bead over half the curving world. Three cheers for Old Glory, fellows.

A Daimio's procession
Winds between two green hills,

A line of thin, sharp, shining, pointed spears
Above red coats
And yellow mushroom hats.
A man leading an ox
Has cast himself upon the ground,
He rubs his forehead in the dust,
While his ox gazes with wide, moon eyes
At the glittering spears
Majestically parading
Between two green hills.

Down, down, down, to the bottom of the map; but we must up again, high on the other side. America, sailing the seas of a planet to stock the shop counters at home. Commerce-raiding a nation; pulling apart the curtains of a temple and calling it trade. Magnificent mission! Every shop-till in every bye-street will bless you. Force the shut gate with the muzzles of your black cannon. Then wait

— wait for fifty years — and see who has conquered.

But now the *Mississippi* must brave the Cape, in a crashing of bitter seas. The wind blows East, the wind blows West, there is no rest under these clashing clouds. Petrel whirl by like torn newspapers along a street. Albatrosses fly close to the mast-heads. Dread purrs over this stormy ocean, and the smell of the water is the dead, oozing dampness of tombs.

Tiger rain on the temple bridge of carved green-
stone,
Slanting tiger lines of rain on the lichened lanterns
of the gateway,
On the stone statues of mythical warriors.
Striped rain making the bells of the pagoda
roofs flutter,
Tiger-footing on the bluish stones of the court-yard,
Beating, snapping, on the cheese-rounds of open
umbrellas,

Licking, tiger-tongued, over the straw mat which
a pilgrim wears upon his shoulders,
Gnawing, tiger-toothed, into the paper mask
Which he carries on his back.
Tiger-clawed rain scattering the peach-blossoms,
Tiger tails of rain lashing furiously among the
cryptomerias.

"Land — O." Mauritius. Stepping-stone four. The coaling ships have arrived, and the shore is a hive of Negroes, and Malays, and Lascars, and Chinese. The clip and clatter of tongues is unceasing. "What awful brutes!" "Obviously, but the fruits they sell are good." "Food, fellows, bully good food." Yankee money for pine-apples, shaddocks, mangoes. "Who were Paul and Virginia?" "Oh, a couple of spooneys who died here, in a shipwreck, because the lady wouldn't take off her smock." "I say, Fred, that's a shabby way to put it. You've

no sentiment." "Maybe. I don't read much myself, and when I do, I prefer United States, something like old Artemus Ward, for instance." "Oh, dry up, and let's get some donkeys and go for a gallop. We've got to begin coaling to-morrow, remember."

The beautiful dresses,
Blue, Green, Mauve, Yellow;
And the beautiful green pointed hats
Like Chinese porcelains!
See, a band of geisha
Is imitating the state procession of a Corean
Ambassador,
Under painted streamers,
On an early afternoon.

The hot sun burns the tar up out of the deck. The paddle-wheels turn, flinging the cupped water over their shoulders. Heat smoulders along the horizon.

The shadow of the ship floats off the starboard quarter, floats like a dark cloth upon the sea. The watch is pulling on the topsail halliards:

"O Sally Brown of New York City,

Ay ay, roll and go."

Like a tired beetle, the *Mississippi* creeps over the flat, glass water, creeps on, breathing heavily. Creeps — creeps — and sighs and settles at Pointe de Galle, Ceylon.

Spice islands speckling the Spanish Main. Fairy tales and stolen readings. Saint John's Eve! Midsummer Madness! Here it is all true. But the smell of the spice-trees is not so nice as the smell of new-mown hay on the Commodore's field at Tarrytown. But what can one say to forests of rose-wood, satin-wood, ebony! To the talipot tree, one leaf of which can cover several people with its single shade. Trade! Trade! Trade in spices for an earlier generation. We dream of lacquers and precious stones.

Of spinning telegraph wires across painted fans. Ceylon is an old story, ours will be the glory of more important conquests.

But wait — wait. No one is likely to force the Gate. The smoke of golden Virginia tobacco floats through the blue palms. "You say you killed forty elephants with this rifle!" "Indeed, yes, and a trifling bag, too."

Down the ninety-mile rapids
Of the Heaven Dragon River,
He came,
With his bowmen,
And his spearmen,
Borne in a gilded palanquin,
To pass the Winter in Yedo
By the Shōgun's decree.
To pass the Winter idling in the Yoshiwara,
While his bowmen and spearmen

Gamble away their rusted weapons

Every evening

At the Hour of the Cock.

Her Britannic Majesty's frigate *Cleopatra* salutes the *Mississippi* as she sails into the harbour of Singapore. Vessels galore choke the wharves. From China, Siam, Malaya; Sumatra, Europe, America. This is the bargain counter of the East. Goods — Goods, dumped ashore to change boats and sail on again. Oaths and cupidity; greasy clothes and greasy dollars wound into turbans. Opium and birds'-nests exchanged for teas, cassia, nankeens; gold thread bartered for Brummagem buttons. Pocket knives told off against teapots. Lots and lots of cheap damaged porcelains, and trains of silken bales awaiting advantageous sales to Yankee merchantmen. The figure-head of the *Mississippi* should be a beneficent angel. With her guns to persuade, she

should lay the foundation of such a market on the shores of Japan. "We will do what we can," writes the Commodore, in his cabin.

Outside the drapery shop of Taketani Sabai,
Strips of dyed cloth are hanging out to dry.
Fine Arimitsu cloth,
Fine blue and white cloth,
Falling from a high staging,
Falling like falling water,
Like blue and white unbroken water
Sliding over a high cliff,
Like the Ono Fall on the Kisokaido Road.
Outside the shop of Taketani Sabai,
They have hung the fine dyed cloth
In strips out to dry.

Romance and heroism; and all to make one dollar two. Through grey fog and fresh blue breezes,

through heat, and sleet, and sheeted rain. For centuries men have pursued the will-o'-the-wisp — trade. And they have got — what? All civilization weighed in twopenny scales and fastened with string. A sailing planet packed in a dry-goods box. Knocks, and shocks, and blocks of extended knowledge, contended for and won. Cloves and nutmegs, and science stowed among the grains. Your gains are not in silver, mariners, but in the songs of violins, and the thin voices whispering through printed books.

"It looks like a dinner-plate," thinks the officer of the watch, as the *Mississippi* sails up the muddy river to Canton, with the Dragon's Cave Fort on one side, and the Girl's Shoe Fort on the other.

The Great Gate looms in a distant mist, and the anchored squadron waits and rests, but its coming is as certain as the equinoxes, and the lightning bolts of its guns are ready to tear off centuries like husks of corn.

The Commodore sips bottled water from Saratoga, and makes out a report for the State Department. The men play pitch-and-toss, and the officers poker, and the betting gives heavy odds against the little monkey-men.

On the floor of the reception room of the Palace
They have laid a white quilt,
And on the quilt, two red rugs;
And they have set up two screens of white paper
To hide that which should not be seen.
At the four corners, they have placed lanterns,
And now they come.
Six attendants,
Three to sit on either side of the condemned man,
Walking slowly.
Three to the right,
Three to the left,
And he between them

In his dress of ceremony
With the great wings.
Shadow wings, thrown by the lantern light,
Trail over the red rugs to the polished floor,
Trail away unnoticed,
For there is a sharp glitter from a dagger
Borne past the lanterns on a silver tray.
"O my Master,
I would borrow your sword,
For it may be a consolation to you
To perish by a sword to which you are accustomed."
Stone, the face of the condemned man,
Stone, the face of the executioner,
And yet before this moment
These were master and pupil,
Honoured and according homage,
And this is an act of honourable devotion.
Each face is passive,
Hewed as out of strong stone,

Cold as a statue above a temple porch.
Down slips the dress of ceremony to the girdle.
Plunge the dagger to its hilt.
A trickle of blood runs along the white flesh
And soaks into the girdle silk.
Slowly across from left to right,
Slowly, upcutting at the end,
But the executioner leaps to his feet,
Poises the sword —
Did it flash, hover, descend?
There is a thud, a horrible rolling,
And the heavy sound of a loosened, falling body,
Then only the throbbing of blood
Spurting into the red rugs.
For he who was a man is that thing
Crumpled up on the floor,
Broken, and crushed into the red rugs.
The friend wipes the sword,
And his face is calm and frozen

As a stone statue on a Winter night

Above a temple gateway.

Part II

Four vessels giving easily to the low-running waves and cat's-paw breezes of a Summer sea. July, 1853, Mid-Century, but just on the turn. Mid-Century, with the vanishing half fluttering behind on a foam-bubbled wake. Four war ships steering for the "Land of Great Peace," caparisoned in state, cleaving a jewelled ocean to a Dragon Gate. Behind it, the quiet of afternoon. Golden light reflecting from the inner sides of shut portals. War is an old wives' tale, a frail beautiful embroidery of other ages. The panoply of battle fades. Arrows rust in arsenals, spears stand useless on their butts in vestibules. Cannon lie unmounted in castle yards, and rats and snakes make nests in them and rear their young in unmolested satisfaction.

The sun of Mid-Summer lies over the "Land of Great Peace," and behind the shut gate they do not hear the paddle-wheels of distant vessels unceasingly turning and advancing, through the jewelled scintillations of the encircling sea.

Susquehanna and *Mississippi*, steamers, towing *Saratoga* and *Plymouth*, sloops of war. Moving on in the very eye of the wind, with not a snip of canvas upon their slim yards. Fugi!—a point above nothing, for there is a haze. Stop gazing, that is the bugle to clear decks and shot guns. We must be prepared, as we run up the coast straight to the Bay of Yedo. "I say, fellows, those boats think they can catch us, they don't know that this is Yankee steam." Bang! The shore guns are at work. And that smoke-ball would be a rocket at night, but we cannot see the gleam in this sunshine.

Black with people are the bluffs of Uraga, watch-

ing the "fire-ships," lipping windless up the bay. Say all the prayers you know, priests of Shinto and Buddha. Ah! The great splashing of the wheels stops, a chain rattles. The anchor drops at the Hour of the Ape.

A clock on the Commodore's chest of drawers strikes five with a silvery tinkle.

Boats are coming from all directions. Beautiful boats of unpainted wood, broad of beam, with tapering sterns, and clean runs. Swiftly they come, with shouting rowers standing to their oars. The shore glitters with spears and lacquered hats. Compactly the boats advance, and each carries a flag — white-black-white — and the stripes break and blow. But the tow-lines are cast loose when the rowers would make them fast to the "black ships," and those who would climb the chains slip back dismayed, checked by a show of cutlasses, pistols, pikes. "*Naru Hodo!*"

This is amazing, unprecedented! Even the Vice-Governor, though he boards the *Susquehanna*, cannot see the Commodore. "His High Mighty Mysteriousness, Lord of the Forbidden Interior," remains in his cabin. Extraordinary! Horrible!

Rockets rise from the forts, and their trails of sparks glitter faintly now, and their bombs break in faded colours as the sun goes down.

Bolt the gate, monkey-men, but it is late to begin turning locks so rusty and worn.

Darkness over rice-fields and hills. The Gold Gate hides in shadow. Upon the indigo-dark water, millions of white jelly-fish drift, like lotus-petals over an inland lake. The land buzzes with prayer, low, dim smoke hanging in air; and every hill gashes and glares with shooting fires. The fire-bells are ringing in double time, and a heavy swinging boom clashes from the great bells of temples. Couriers lash their

horses, riding furiously to Yedo; junks and scull-boats arrive hourly at Shinagawa with news; runners, bearing dispatches, pant in government offices. The hollow doors of the Great Gate beat with alarms. The charmed Dragon Country shakes and trembles. Iyéyoshi, twelfth Shōgun of the Tokugawa line, sits in his city. Sits in the midst of one million, two hundred thousand trembling souls, and his mind rolls forward and back like a ball on a circular runway, and finds no goal. Roll, poor distracted mind of a sick man. What can you do but wait, trusting in your Dragon Gate, for how should you know that it is rusted.

But there is a sign over the "black ships." A wedge-shaped tail of blue sparklets, edged with red, trails above them as though a Dragon were pouring violet sulphurous spume from steaming nostrils, and the hulls and rigging are pale, quivering, bright as Taira ghosts on the sea of Nagatō.

Up and down walk sentinels, fore and aft, and at the side gangways. There is a pile of round shot and four stands of grape beside each gun; and carbines, and pistols, and cutlasses, are laid in the boats. Floating arsenals — floating sample-rooms for the wares of a continent; shop-counters, flanked with weapons, adrift among the jelly-fishes.

Eight bells, and the meteor washes away before the wet, white wisps of dawn.

Through the countrysides of the "Land of Great Peace," flowers are blooming. The greenish-white, sterile blossoms of hydrangeas boom faintly, like distant inaudible bombs of colour exploding in the woods. Weigelias prick the pink of their slender trumpets against green backgrounds. The fan-shaped leaves of ladies' slippers rustle under cryptomerias.

Midsummer heat curls about the cinnamon-red

tree-boles along the Tokaido. The road ripples and glints with the passing to and fro, and beyond, in the roadstead, the "black ships" swing at their anchors and wait.

All up and down the Eastern shore of the bay is a feverish digging, patting, plastering. Forts to be built in an hour to resist the barbarians, if, peradventure, they can. Japan turned to, what will it not do! Fishermen and palanquin-bearers, pack-horse-leaders and farm-labourers, even women and children, pat and plaster. Disaster batters at the Dragon Gate. Batters at the doors of Yedo, where Samurai unpack their armour, and whet and feather their arrows.

Daimios smoke innumerable pipes, and drink unnumbered cups of tea, discussing — discussing — "What is to be done?" The Shōgun is no Emperor. What shall they do if the "hairy devils" take a notion to go to Kiōto! Then indeed would the Toku-

gawa fall. The prisons are crammed with those who advise opening the Gate. Open the Gate, and let the State scatter like dust to the winds! Absurd! Unthinkable! Suppress the "brocade pictures" of the floating monsters with which book-sellers and picture-shop keepers are delighting and affrighting the populace. Place a ban on speech. Preach, inert Daimios — the Commodore will *not* go to Nagasaki, and the roar of his guns will drown the clattering fall of your Dragon Doors if you do not open them in time. East and West, and trade shaded by heroism. Hokusai is dead, but his pupils are lampooning your carpet soldiers. Spare the dynasty — parley, procrastinate. Appoint two Princes to receive the Commodore, at once, since he will not wait over long. At Kurihama, for he must not come to Yedo.

Flip — flap — flutter — flags in front of the Conference House. Built over night, it seems, with un-

painted peaked summits of roofs gleaming like ricks of grain. Flip — flutter — flap — variously-tinted flags, in a crescent about nine tall standards whose long scarlet pennons brush the ground. Beat — tap — fill and relapse — the wind pushing against taut white cloth screens, bellying out the Shōgun's crest of heart-shaped Asarum leaves in the panels, crumpling them to indefinite figures of scarlet spotting white. Flip — ripple — brighten — over serried ranks of soldiers on the beach. Sword-bearers, spear-bearers, archers, lancers, and those who carry heavy, antiquated matchlocks. The block of them five thousand armed men, drawn up in front of a cracking golden door. But behind their bristling spears, the cracks are hidden.

Braying, blasting blares from two brass bands, approaching in glittering boats over glittering water. One is playing the "Overture" from "William Tell," the other, "The Last Rose of Summer," and the way

the notes clash, and shock, and shatter, and dissolve, is wonderful to hear. Queer barbarian music, and the monkey-soldiers stand stock still, listening to its reverberation humming in the folded doors of the Great Gate.

Stuff your ears, monkey-soldiers, screw your faces, shudder up and down your spines. Cannon! Cannon! from one of the "black ships." Thirteen thudding explosions, thirteen red dragon tongues, thirteen clouds of smoke like the breath of the mountain gods. Thirteen hammer strokes shaking the Great Gate, and the seams in the metal widen. Open Sesame, shotless guns; and "The Only, High, Grand and Mighty, Invisible Mysteriousness, Chief Barbarian" reveals himself, and steps into his barge.

Up, oars, down; drip — sun-spray — rowlock-rattle. To shore! To shore! Set foot upon the sacred soil of the "Land of Great Peace," with its five thousand armed men doing nothing with their

spears and matchlocks, because of the genii in the black guns aboard the "black ships."

One hundred marines in a line up the wharf. One hundred sailors, man to man, opposite them. Officers, two deep; and, up the centre — the Procession. Bands together now: "Hail Columbia." Marines in file, sailors after, a staff with the American flag borne by seamen, another with the Commodore's broad pennant. Two boys, dressed for ceremony, carrying the President's letter and credentials in golden boxes. Tall, blue-black negroes on either side of — THE COMMODORE! Walking slowly, gold, blue, steel-glitter, up to the Conference House, walking in state up to an ancient tottering Gate, lately closed securely, but now gaping. Bands, rain your music against this golden barrier, harry the ears of the monkey-men. The doors are ajar, and the Commodore has entered.

Prince of Idzu — Prince of Iwami — in winged dresses of gold brocade, at the end of a red carpet, under violet, silken hangings, under crests of scarlet heart-shaped Asarum leaves, guardians of a scarlet lacquered box, guardians of golden doors, worn thin and bending.

In silence the blue-black negroes advance and take the golden boxes from the page boys; in silence they open them and unwrap blue velvet coverings. Silently they display the documents to the Prince of Idzu — the Prince of Iwami — motionless, inscrutable — beyond the red carpet.

The vellum crackles as it is unfolded, and the long silk-gold cords of the seals drop their gold tassels to straight glistening inches and swing slowly — gold tassels clock-ticking before a doomed, burnished gate.

The negroes lay the vellum documents upon the

scarlet lacquered box; bow, and retire.

"I am desirous that our two countries should trade with each other." Careful letters, carefully traced on rich parchment, and the low sun casts the shadow of the Gate far inland over high hills.

"The letter of the President of the United States will be delivered to the Emperor. Therefore you can now go."

The Commodore, rising: "I will return for the answer during the coming Spring."

But ships are frail, and seas are fickle, one can nail fresh plating over the thin gate before Spring. Prince of Idzu — Prince of Iwami — inscrutable statesmen, insensate idiots, trusting blithely to a lock when the key-guns are trained even now upon it.

Withdraw, Procession. Dip oars back to the "black ships." Slip cables and depart, for day after

day will lapse and nothing can retard a coming Spring.

Panic Winter throughout the "Land of Great Peace." Panic, and haste, wasting energies and accomplishing nothing. Kiōto has heard, and prays, trembling. Priests at the shrine of Isé whine long, slow supplications from dawn to dawn, and through days dropping down again from morning. Iyéyoshi is dead, and Iyésada rules in Yedo; thirteenth Shōgun of the Tokugawa. Rules and struggles, rescinds laws, urges reforms; breathless, agitated endeavours to patch and polish where is only corroding and puffed particles of dust.

It is Winter still in the Bay of Yedo, though the plum-trees of Kamata and Kinagawa are white and fluttering.

Winter, with green, high, angular seas. But over the water, far toward China, are burning the furnaces

of three great steamers, and four sailing vessels heel over, with decks slanted and sails full and pulling.

"There's a bit of a lop, this morning. Mr. Jones, you'd better take in those royals."

"Ay, ay, Sir. Tumble up here, men! Tumble up! Lay aloft and stow royals. Haul out to leeward."

"To *my*,

Ay,

And we'll *furl*

Ay,

And pay Paddy Doyle for his boots."

"Taut band — knot away."

Chug! Chug! go the wheels of the consorts, salting smoke-stacks with whirled spray.

The Commodore lights a cigar, and paces up and down the quarter-deck of the *Powhatan*. "I wonder what the old yellow devils will do," he muses.

Forty feet high, the camellia trees, with hard, green

buds unburst. It is early yet for camellias, and the green buds and the glazed green leaves toss frantically in a blustering March wind. Sheltered behind the forty feet high camellia trees, on the hills of Idzu, stand watchmen straining their eyes over a broken dazzle of sea.

Just at the edge of moonlight and sunlight — moon setting; sun rising — they come. Seven war ships heeled over and flashing, dashing through heaped waves, sleeping a moment in hollows, leaping over ridges, sweeping forward in a strain of canvas and a train of red-black smoke.

"The fire-ships! The fire-ships!"

Slip the bridles of your horses, messengers, and clatter down the Tokaido; scatter pedestrians, palanquins, slow moving cattle, right and left into the cryptomerias; rattle over bridges, spatter dust into shop-windows. To Yedo! To Yedo! For Spring is here, and the fire-ships have come!

Seven vessels, flying the stars and stripes, three more shortly to join them, with ripe, fruit-bearing guns pointed inland.

Princes evince doubt, distrust. Learning must beat learning. Appoint a Professor of the University. Delay, prevaricate. How long can the play continue? Hayashi, learned scholar of Confucius and Mencius — he shall confer with the barbarians at Uraga. Shall he! Word comes that the Mighty Chief of Ships will not go to Uraga. Steam is up, and — Horror! Consternation! The squadron moves toward Yedo! Sailors, midshipmen, lieutenants, pack yards and cross-trees, seeing temple gates, castle towers, flowered pagodas, and look-outs looming distantly clear, and the Commodore on deck can hear the slow booming of the bells from the temples of Shiba and Asakusa.

You must capitulate, great Princes of a quivering

gate. Say Yokohama, and the Commodore will agree, for they must not come to Yedo.

Rows of japonicas in full bloom outside the Conference House. Flags, and streamers, and musicians, and pikemen. Five hundred officers, seamen, marines, and the Commodore following in his white-painted gig. A jig of fortune indeed, with a sailor and a professor manœuvring for terms, chess-playing each other in a game of future centuries.

The Americans bring presents. Presents now, to be bought hereafter. Good will, to head long bills of imports. Occidental mechanisms to push the Orient into limbo. Fox-moves of interpreters, and Pandora's box with a contents rated far too low.

Round and round goes the little train on its circular railroad, at twenty miles an hour, with grave dignitaries seated on its roof. Smiles, gestures, at messages running over wire, a mile away. Touch

the harrows, the ploughs, the flails, and shudder at the "spirit pictures" of the daguerreotype machine. These Barbarians have harnessed gods and dragons. They build boats which will not sink, and tinker little gold wheels till they follow the swinging of the sun.

Run to the Conference House. See, feel, listen. And shrug deprecating shoulders at the glisten of silk and lacquer given in return. What are cups cut out of conch-shells, and red-dyed figured crêpe, to railroads, and burning engines!

Go on board the "black ships" and drink mint juleps and brandy smashes, and click your tongues over sweet puddings. Offer the strangers pickled plums, sugared fruits, candied walnuts. Bruit the news far inland through the mouths of countrymen. Who thinks of the Great Gate! Its portals are pushed so far back that the shining edges of them can scarcely be observed. The Commodore has never swerved a moment from his purpose, and the

dragon mouths of his guns have conquered without the need of a single powder-horn.

The Commodore writes in his cabin. Writes an account of what he has done.

The sands of centuries run fast, one slides, and another, each falling into a smother of dust.

A locomotive in pay for a Whistler; telegraph wires buying a revolution; weights and measures and Audubon's birds in exchange for fear. Yellow monkey-men leaping out of Pandora's box, shaking the rocks of the Western coastline. Golden California bartering panic for prints. The dressing-gowns of a continent won at the cost of security. Artists and philosophers lost in the hour-glass sand pouring through an open Gate.

Ten ships sailing for China on a fair May wind. Ten ships sailing from one world into another, but

never again into the one they left. Two years and a tip-turn is accomplished. Over the globe and back, Rip Van Winkle ships. Slip into your docks in Newport, in Norfolk, in Charlestown. You have blown off the locks of the East, and what is coming will come.

Postlude

In the Castle moat, lotus flowers are blooming,
They shine with the light of an early moon
Brightening above the Castle towers.
They shine in the dark circles of their unreflecting leaves.
Pale blossoms,
Pale towers,
Pale moon,
Deserted ancient moat
About an ancient stronghold,
Your bowmen are departed,
Your strong walls are silent,

Their only echo
A croaking of frogs.
Frogs croaking at the moon
In the ancient moat
Of an ancient, crumbling Castle.

1903. JAPAN

The high cliff of the Kegon waterfall, and a young man carving words on the trunk of a tree. He finishes, pauses an instant, and then leaps into the foam-cloud rising from below. But, on the tree-trunk, the newly-cut words blaze white and hard as though set with diamonds:

"How mightily and steadily go Heaven and Earth! How infinite the duration of Past and Present! Try to measure this vastness with five feet. A word explains the Truth of the whole Universe — *unknowable*. To cure my agony I have decided to die. Now, as I stand on the crest of this rock, no un-

easiness is left in me. For the first time I know that extreme pessimism and extreme optimism are one."

1903. America

"Nocturne — Blue and Silver — Battersea Bridge.

Nocturne — Grey and Silver — Chelsea Embankment.

Variations in Violet and Green."

Pictures in a glass-roofed gallery, and all day long the throng of people is so great that one can scarcely see them. Debits — credits? Flux and flow through a wide gateway. Occident — Orient — after fifty years.

HEDGE ISLAND

HEDGE ISLAND

A Retrospect and a Prophecy

Hedges of England, peppered with sloes; hedges of England, rows and rows of thorn and brier raying out from the fire where London burns with its steaming lights, throwing a glare on the sky o' nights. Hedges of England, road after road, lane after lane, and on again to the sea at the North, to the sea at the East, blackberry hedges, and man and beast plod and trot and gallop between hedges of England, clipped and clean; beech, and laurel, and hornbeam, and yew, wheels whirl under, and circle through, tunnels of green to the sea at the South; wind-blown hedges to mark the mouth of Thames or Humber, the Western rim. Star-point hedges, smooth and trim.

Star-point indeed, with all His Majesty's mails agog every night for the provinces. Twenty-seven fine crimson coaches drawn up in double file in Lombard Street. Great gold-starred coaches, blazing with royal insignia, waiting in line at the Post-Office. Eight of a Summer's evening, and the sun only just gone down. "Lincoln," "Winchester," "Portsmouth," shouted from the Post-Office steps; and the Portsmouth chestnuts come up to the collar with a jolt, and stop again, dancing, as the bags are hoisted up. "Gloucester," "Oxford," "Bristol," "York," "Norwich." Rein in those bays of the Norwich team, they shy badly at the fan-gleam of the lamp over the Post-Office door. "All in. No more." The stones of St. Martin's-le-Grand sparkle under the slap of iron shoes. Off you go, bays, and the greys of the Dover mail start forward, twitch-

ing, hitching, champing, stamping, their little feet pat the ground in patterns and their bits fleck foam. "Whoa! Steady!" with a rush they are gone. But Glasgow is ready with a team of piebalds and sorrels, driven chess-board fashion. Bang down, lids of mail-boxes — thunder-lids, making the horses start. They part and pull, push each other sideways, sprawl on the slippery pavement, and gather wave-like and crashing to a leap. Spicey tits those! Tootle-too! A nice calculation for the gate, not a minute to spare, with the wheelers well up in the bit and the leaders carrying bar. Forty-two hours to Scotland, and we have a coachman who keeps his horses like clock-work. Whips flick, buckles click, and wheels turn faster and faster till the spokes blur. "Sound your horn, Walter." Make it echo back and forth from the fronts of houses. Good-night, London, we are carrying the mails to the North. Big, burning light which is London, we dip

over Highgate hill and leave you. The air is steady, the night is bright, the roads are firm. The wheels hum like a gigantic spinning-jenny. Up North, where the hedges bloom with roses. Through Whetstone Gate to Alconbury Hill. Stop at the *Wheatsheaf* one minute for the change. They always have an eye open here, it takes thirty seconds to drink a pot of beer, even the post-boys sleep in their spurs. The wheels purr over the gravel. "Give the off-hand leader a cut on the cheek." Whip! Whew! This is the first night of three. Three nights to Glasgow; hedges — hedges — shoot and flow. Eleven miles an hour, and the hedges are showered with glow-worms. The hedges and the glow-worms are very still, but we make a prodigious clatter. What does it matter? It is good for these yokels to be waked up. Tootle-toot! The diamond-paned lattice of a cottage flies open. Post-office here. Throw them on their haunches. Bag up —

bag down — and the village has grown indistinct behind. The old moon is racing us, she slices through trees like a knife through cheese. Distant clocks strike midnight. The coach rocks — this is a galloping stage. We have a roan near-wheel and a grey off-wheel and our leaders are chestnuts, "quick as light, clever as cats."

The sickle-flame of our lamps cuts past sequences of trees and well-plashed quickset hedges — hedges of England, long shafts of the nimbus of London. Hurdles here and there. Park palings. Reflections in windows. On — on — through the night to the North. Over stretched roads, with a soft, continuous motion like slipping water. Nights and days unwinding down long roads.

In the green dawn, spires and bell-towers start up and stare at us. Hoary old woods nod and beckon. A castle turret glitters through trees. There is a perfume of wild-rose and honey-bine, twining in the

hedges — Northerly hedges, sliding away behind us. The pole-chains tinkle tunes and play a saraband with sheep-bells beyond the hedges. Wedges of fields — square, flat, slatted green with corn, purple with cabbages. The stable clocks of Gayhurst and Tyringham chime from either side of the road. The Ouse twinkles blue among smooth meadows. Go! Go! News of the World! Perhaps a victory! the "Nile" or "Salamanca"! Perhaps a proclamation, or a fall in the rate of consols. Whatever it is, the hedges of England hear it first. Hear it, and flick and flutter their leaves, and catch the dust of it on their shining backs. Bear it over the dumpling hills and the hump-backed bridges. Start it down the rivers: Eden, Eshe, Sark, Milk, Driff, and Clyde. Shout it to the sculptured corbels of old churches. Lurch round corners with it, and stop with a snap before the claret-coloured brick front of the *Bell* at Derby, and call it to the ostler as he runs out with

fresh horses. The twenty Corinthian columns of pale primrose alabaster at Keddleston Hall tremble with its importance. Even the runaway couples bound for Gretna Green cheer and wave. Laurels, and ribbons, and a red flag on our roof. "Wellesley forever!"

Dust dims the hedges. A light travelling chariot running sixteen miles an hour with four blood mares doing their bravest. Whip, bound, and cut again. Loose rein, quick spur. He stands up in the chariot and shakes a bag full of broad guineas, you can hear them — clinking, chinking — even above the roar of wheels. "Go it! Go it! We are getting away from them. Fifty guineas to each of you if we get there in time." Quietly wait, grey hedges, it will all happen again: quick whip, spur, strain. Two purple-faced gentlemen in another chariot, black geldings smoking hot, blood and froth flipped over

the hedges. They hail the coach: "How far ahead? Can we catch them?" "Ten minutes gone by. Not more." The post-boys wale their lunging horses. Rattle, reel, and plunge.

But the runaways have Jack Ainslee from the *Bush*, Carlisle. He rides in a yellow jacket, and he knows every by-lane and wood between here and the border. In an hour he will have them at Gretna, and to-night the lady will write to her family at Doncaster, and the down mail will carry the letter, with tenpence halfpenny to pay for news that nobody wishes to hear.

"Buy a pottle of plums, Good Sir." "Cherries, fine, ripe cherries O." Get your plums and cherries, and hurry into the *White Horse Cellar* for a last rum and milk. You are a poet, bound to Dover over Westminster Bridge. Ah, well, all the same. You are an Essex farmer, grown fat by selling your

peas at Covent Garden Market at four guineas a pint. Certainly; as you please. You are a prebend of Exeter or Wells, timing your journey to the Cathedral Close. If you choose. You are a Corinthian Buck going down to Brighton by the *Age* which runs "with a fury." Mercury on a box seat.

Get up, beavers and top-boots. Shoot the last parcel in. Now — "Let 'em go. I have 'em." That *was* a jerk, but the coachman lets fly his whip and quirks his off-wheeler on the thigh. Out and under the archway of the coach-yard, with the guard playing "Sally in our Alley" on his key-bugle. White with sun, the streets of London. Cloud-shadows run ahead of us along the streets. Morning. Summer. England. "Have a light, Sir? Tobacco tastes well in this fresh air."

Hedges of England, how many wheels spatter you in a day? How many coaches roll between you on

their star-point way? What rainbow colours slide past you with the fluency of water? Crimson mails rumble and glide the night through, but the Cambridge *Telegraph* is a brilliant blue. The *Bull and Mouth* coaches are buttercup yellow, those of the *Bull* are painted red, while the *Bell and Crown* sports a dark maroon with light red wheels. They whirl by in a flurry of dust and colours. Soon all this will drop asunder like the broken glass of a kaleidoscope. Hedges, you will see other pictures. New colours will flow beside you. New shapes will intersect you. Tut! Tut! Have you not hawthorn blossoms and the hips and haws of roses?

Trundle between your sharp-shorn hedges, old *Tally-hoes*, and *Comets*, and *Regents*. Stop at the *George*, and turn with a flourish into the yard, where a strapper is washing a mud-splashed chaise,

and the horsekeeper is putting a "point" on that best whip of yours. "Coach stops here half an hour, Gentlemen: dinner quite ready." A long oak corridor. Then a burst of sunshine through leaded windows, spangling a floor, iris-tinting rounds of beef, and flaked veal pies, and rose-marbled hams, and great succulent cheeses. Wine-glasses take it and break it, and it quivers away over the table-cloth in faint rainbows; or, straight and sudden, stamps a startling silver whorl on the polished side of a teapot of hot bohea. A tortoise-shell cat naps between red geraniums, and myrtle sprigs tap the stuccoed wall, gently blowing to and fro.

Ah, hedges of England, have you led to this? Do you always conduct to galleried inns, snug bars, beds hung with flowered chintz, sheets smelling of lavender?

What of the target practice off Spithead? What of the rocking seventy-fours, flocking like gulls about

the harbour entrances? Hedges of England, can they root you in the sea?

Your leaves rustle to the quick breeze of wheels incessantly turning. This island might be a treadmill kept floating right side up by galloping hoofs.

Gabled roofs of *Green Dragons*, and *Catherine Wheels*, and *Crowns*, ivy-covered walls, cool cellars holding bins and bins of old port, and claret, and burgundy. You cannot hear the din of passing chaises, underground, there is only the sound of beer running into a jug as the landlord turns the spiggot of a barrel. Green sponge of England, your heart is red with wine. "Fine spirits and brandies." Ha! Ha! Good old England, drinking, blinking, dreading new ideas. Queer, bluff, burly England. You have Nelsons, and Wellesleys, and Tom Cribbs, but you have also Wordsworths and Romneys, and (a whisper in your ear) Arkwrights and Stevensons.

"Time's up, Gentlemen; take your places, please!" The horn rings out, the bars rattle, the horses sidle and paw and swing; swish — clip — with the long whip, and away to the hedges again. The high, bordering hedges, leading to Salisbury, and Bath, and Exeter.

Christmas weather with a hard frost. Hips and haws sparkle in the hedges, garnets and carnelians scattered on green baize. The edges of the coachman's hat are notched with icicles. The horses slip on the frozen roads. Loads are heavy at this time of year, with rabbits and pheasants tied under the coach, but it is all hearty Christmas cheer, rushing between the hedges to get there in time for the plum-pudding. Old England forever! And coach-horns, and waits, and Cathedral organs hail the Star of Bethlehem.

But our star, our London, gutters with fog. The

Thames rolls like smoke under charcoal. The dome of St. Paul's is gone, so is the spire of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, only the fires of torches are brisk and tossing. Tossing torches; tossing heads of horses. Eight mails following each other out of London by torchlight. Scarcely can we see the red flare of the horn lantern in the hand of the ostler at the *Peacock*, but his voice blocks squarely into the fog: "*York Highflyer*," "*Leeds Union*," "*Stamford Regent.*" Coach lamps stream and stare, and key-bugles play fugues with each other; "Oh, Dear, What Can the Matter Be?" and "The Flaxen Headed Plough-boy" canon and catch as the mails take the road. There will be no "springing" the horses over the "hospital ground" on a day like this; we cannot make more than three miles an hour in such a fog. Hedges of England, you are only ledges from which water drips back to the sea. The rain is so heavy the coach sways. There will be floods farther on.

Floods over the river Mole, with apples, and trees, and hurdles floating. Have a care with your leaders there, they have lost the road, and the wheelers have toppled into a ditch of swirling, curling water. The wheelers flounder and squeal and drown, but the coach is hung up on the stump of a willow-tree, and the passengers have only a broken leg or two among them.

Double thong your team, Coachman, that creaking gibbet on the top of Hindhead is an awesome sight at the fall of night, with the wind roaring and squeaking over the heather. The murder, they say, was done at this spot. Give it to them on the flank, good and hot. "Lord, I wish I had a nip of cherry-brandy." "What was that; down in the bowl!" "Drop my arm, Damn you! or you will roll the coach over!" Teeth chatter, bony castanets — click — click — to a ghastly tune, click — click — on

the gallows-tree, where it blows so windily. Blows the caged bones all about, one or two of them have dropped out. The up coach will see them lying on the ground like snow-flakes to-morrow. But we shall be floundering in a drift, and shifting the mail-bags to one of the horses so that the guard can carry them on.

Hedges of England, smothered in snow. Hedges of England, row after row, flat and obliterate down to the sea; but the chains are choked on the gallows-tree. Round about England the toothed waves snarl, gnarling her cliffs of chalk and marl. Crabbed England, consuming beef and pudding, and pouring down magnums of port, to cheat the elements. Go it, England, you will beat Bonaparte yet. What have you to do with ideas! You have Bishops, and Squires, and Manor-houses, and — rum.

London shakes with bells. Loud, bright bells

clashing over roofs and steeples, exploding in the sunlight with the brilliance of rockets. Every clock-tower drips a tune. The people are merry-making, for this is the King's Birthday and the mails parade this afternoon.

"Messrs. Vidler and Parrat request the pleasure of Mr. Chaplin's company on Thursday the twenty-eighth of May, to a cold collation at three o'clock and to see the Procession of the Mails."

What a magnificent spectacle! A coil of coaches progressing round and round Lincoln's Inn Fields. Sun-mottled harness, gold and scarlet guards, horns throwing off sprays of light and music. Liverpool, Manchester — blacks and greys; Bristol, Devonport — satin bays; Holyhead — chestnuts; Halifax — roans, blue-specked, rose-specked . . . On their box-seat thrones sit the mighty coachmen, twisting their horses this way and that with a turn of the wrist. These are the spokes of a wheeling sun, these are the

rays of London's aureole. This is her star-fire, reduced by a prism to separate sparks. Cheer, good people! Chuck up your hats, and buy violets to pin in your coats. You shall see it all to-night, when the King's arms shine in lamps from every house-front, and the mails, done parading, crack their whips and depart. England forever! Hurrah!

England forever — going to the Prize Fight on Copthorne Common. England forever, with a blue coat and scarlet lining hanging over the back of the tilbury. England driving a gig and one horse; England set up with a curricle and two. England in donkey-carts and coaches. England swearing, pushing, drinking, happy, off to see the "Game Chicken" punch the "Nonpareil's" face to a black-and-blue jelly. Good old England, drunk as a lord, cursing the turn-pike men. Your hedges will be a nest of broken bottles before night, and clouds of dust will

quench the perfume of your flowers. I bet you three bulls to a tanner you can't smell a rose for a week.

They've got the soldiers out farther along. "Damn the soldiers! Drive through them, Watson." A fine, manly business; are we slaves? "Britons never — never —" Waves lap the shores of England, waves like watchdogs growling; and long hedges bind her like a bundle. Sit safe, England, trussed and knotted; while your strings hold, all will be well.

But in the distance there is a puff of steam. Just a puff, but it will do. Post-boys, coachmen, guards, chaises, melt like meadow rime before the sun.

You spun your webs over England, hedge to hedge. You kept England bound together by your spinning wheels. But it is gone. They have driven a wedge of iron into your heart. They have dried up the sea, and made pathways in the swimming air. They

have tapped the barrels in your cellars and your throats are parched and bleeding. But still the hedges blow for the Spring, and dusty soldiers smell your roses as they tramp to Aldershot or Dorchester.

England forever! Star-pointed and shining. Flinging her hedges out and asunder to embrace the world.

THE BRONZE HORSES

THE BRONZE HORSES

Elements

Earth, Air, Water, and Fire! Earth beneath, Air encompassing, Water within its boundaries. But Fire is nothing, comes from nothing, goes nowhither. Fire leaps forth and dies, yet is everything sprung out of Fire.

The flame grows and drops away, and where it stood is vapour, and where was the vapour is swift revolution, and where was the revolution is spinning resistance, and where the resistance endured is crystallization. Fire melts, and the absence of Fire cools and freezes. So are metals fused in twisted flames and take on a form other than that they have known, and this new form shall be to them rebirth and making. For in it they will stand upon the Earth, and in it they will defy the Air, and in it they will suffer the Water.

But Fire, coming again, the substance changes and is transformed. Therefore are things known only between burning and burning. The quickly consumed more swiftly vanish, yet all must feel the heat of the flame which waits in obscurity, knowing its own time and what work it has to do.

Rome

The blue sky of Italy; the blue sky of Rome. Sunlight pouring white and clear from the wide-stretched sky. Sunlight sliding softly over white marble, lying in jasmine circles before cool porticoes, striking sharply upon roofs and domes, recoiling before straight façades of grey granite, foiled and beaten by the deep halls of temples.

Sunlight on tiles and tufa, sunlight on basalt and porphyry. The sky stripes Rome with sun and shadow; strips of yellow, strips of blue, pepper-dots of purple and orange. It whip-lashes the four great

horses of gilded bronze, harnessed to the bronze *quadriga* on the Arch of Nero, and they trot slowly forward without moving. The horses tread the marbles of Rome beneath their feet. Their golden flanks quiver in the sunlight. One foot paws the air. A step, and they will lance into the air, Pegasus-like, stepping the wind. But they do not take the step. They wait—poised, treading Rome as they trod Alexandria, as they trod the narrow Island of Cos. The spokes of the *quadriga* wheels flash, but they do not turn. They burn like day-stars above the Arch of Nero. The horses poise over Rome, a constellation of morning, triumphant above Emperors, proud, indifferent, enduring, relentlessly spurning the hot dust of Rome. Hot dust clouds up about them, but not one particle sticks to their gilded manes. Dust is nothing, a mere smoke of disappearing hours. Slowly they trot forward without moving, and time passes and passes them, brushing along their sides like wind.

People go and come in the streets of Rome, shuffling over the basalt paving-stones in their high latcheted sandals. White and purple, like the white sun and the purple shadows, the senators pass, followed by a crowd of slaves. Waves of brown-coated populace efface themselves before a litter, carried by eight Cappadocians in light-red tunics; as it moves along, there is the flicker of a violet *stola* and the blowing edge of a *palla* of sky-white blue. A lady, going to the bath to lie for an hour in the crimson and wine-red reflections of a marble chamber, to glide over a floor of green and white stones into a Carraran basin, where the green and blue water will cover her rose and blue-veined flesh with a slipping veil. Aqua Claudia, Aqua Virgo, Aqua Marcia, drawn from the hills to lie against a woman's body. Her breasts round hollows for themselves in the sky-green water, her fingers sift the pale water and drop it from

her as a lark drops notes backwards into the sky. The lady lies against the lipping water, supine and indolent, a pomegranate, a passion-flower, a silver-flamed lily, lapped, slapped, lulled, by the ripples which stir under her faintly moving hands.

Later, beneath a painting of twelve dancing girls upon a gold ground, the slaves will anoint her with cassia, or nakte, or spikenard, or balsam, and she will go home in the swaying litter to eat the tongues of red flamingoes, and drink honey-wine flavoured with far-smelling mint.

Legionaries ravish Egypt for her entertainment; they bring her roses from Alexandria at a cost of thirty thousand pounds. Yet she would rather be at Baiæ, one is so restricted in one's pleasures in Rome! The games are not until next week, and her favourite gladiator, Naxos, is in training just now, therefore time drags. The lady lags over her quail

and peacocks' eggs. How dull it is. White, and blue, and stupid. Rome!

Smoke flutters and veers from the top of the Temple of Vesta. Altar smoke winding up to the gilded horses as they tread above Rome. Below — laughing, jangling, pushing and rushing. Two carts are jammed at a street corner, and the oaths of the drivers mingle, and snap, and corrode, like hot fused metal, one against another. They hiss and sputter, making a confused chord through which the squeal of a derrick winding up a granite slab pierces, shrill and nervous, a sharp boring sound, shoring through the wide, white light of the Roman sky. People are selling things: matches, broken glass, peas, sausages, cakes. A string of donkeys, with panniers loaded with red asparagus and pale-green rue, minces past the derrick, the donkeys squeeze, one by one, with little patting feet, between the derrick and the

choked crossing. "Hey! Gallus, have you heard that Cæsar has paid a million *sestertii* for a Murrhine vase. It is green and white, flaked like a Spring onion, and has the head of Minerva cut in it, sharp as a signet." "And who has a better right indeed, now that Titus has conquered Judea. He will be here next week, they say, and then we shall have a triumph worth looking at." "Famous indeed! We need something. It's been abominably monotonous lately. Why, there was not enough blood spilled in the games last week to give one the least appetite. I'm damned stale, for one."

Still, over Rome, the white sun sails the blue, stretching sky, casting orange and purple striæ down upon the marble city, cool and majestic, between cool hills, white and omnipotent, dying of languor, amusing herself for a moment with the little boats floating up the Tiber bringing the good grain of Carthage, then relaxed and falling as water falls,

dropping into the bath. Weak as water; without contour as water; colourless as water; Rome bathes, and relaxes, and melts. Fluid and fluctuating, a liquid city pouring itself back into the streams of the earth. And above, on the Arch of Nero, hard, metallic, firm, cold, and permanent, the bronze horses trot slowly, not moving, and the moon casts the fine-edged shadow of them down upon the paving-stones.

Hills of the city: Pincian, Esquiline, Carlian, Aventine, the crimson tip of the sun burns against you, and you start into sudden clearness and glow red, red-gold, saffron, gradually diminishing to an outline of blue. The sun mounts over Rome, and the Arch of Augustus glitters like a cleft pomegranate; the Temples of Julius Cæsar, Castor, and Saturn, turn carbuncle, and rose, and diamond. Columns divide into double edges of flash and shadow; domes glare,

inverted beryls hanging over arrested scintillations. The fountains flake and fringe with the scatter of the sun. The mosaic floors of *atriums* are no longer stone, but variegated fire; higher, on the walls, the pictures painted in the white earth of Melos, the red earth of Sinope, the yellow ochre of Attica, erupt into flame. The legs of satyrs jerk with desire, the dancers whirl in torch-bright involutions. Grapes split and burst, spurting spots and sparks of sun.

It is morning in Rome, and the bronze horses on the Arch of Nero trot quietly forward without moving, but no one can see them, they are only a dazzle, a shock of stronger light against the white-blue sky.

Morning in Rome; and the whole city foams out to meet it, seething, simmering, surging, seeping. All between the Janiculum and the Palatine is undulating with people. Scarlet, violet, and purple togas pattern the mass of black and brown. Murex-dyed silk dresses flow beside raw woollen fabrics.

The altars smoke incense, the bridges shake under the caking mass of sight-seers. "Titus! Titus! *Io triumphe!*" Even now the troops are collected near the Temple of Apollo, outside the gates, waiting for the signal to march. In the parching Roman morning, the hot dust rises and clouds over the city — an aureole of triumph. The horses on the Arch of Nero paw the golden dust, but it passes, passes, brushing along their burnished sides like wind.

What is that sound? The marble city shivers to the treading of feet. Cæsar's legions marching, foot — foot — hundreds, thousands of feet. They beat the ground, rounding each step double. Coming — coming — cohort after cohort, with brazen trumpets marking the time. One — two — one — two — laurel-crowned each one of you, cactus-fibred, harsh as sand grinding the rocks of a treeless land, rough and salt as a Dead Sea wind, only the fallen

are left behind. Blood-red plumes, jarring to the footfalls; they have passed through the gate, they are in the walls of the mother city, of marble Rome. Their tunics are purple embroidered with gold, their armour clanks as they walk, the cold steel of their swords is chill in the sun, each is a hero, one by one, endless companies, the soldiers come. Back to Rome with a victor's spoils, with a victor's wreath on every head, and Judah broken is dead, dead! "*Io triumphe!*" The shout knocks and breaks upon the spears of the legionaries.

The God of the Jews is overborne, he has failed his people. See the stuffs from the Syrian looms, and the vestments of many-colours, they were taken from the great Temple at Jerusalem. And the watching crowds split their voices acclaiming the divine triumph. Mars, and Juno, and Minerva, and the rest, those gods are the best who bring victory! And the beasts they have over there! Is that a

crocodile? And that bird with a tail as long as a banner, what do you call that? Look at the elephants, and the dromedaries! They are harnessed in jewels. Oh! Oh! The beautiful sight! Here come the prisoners, dirty creatures. "That's a good-looking girl there. I have rather a fancy for a Jewess. I'll get her, by Bacchus, if I have to mortgage my farm. A man too, of course, to keep the breed going; it will be a good investment, although, to be sure, I want the girl myself. Castor and Pollux, did you see that picture! Ten men disembowelled on the steps of the altar. That is better than a gladiator show any day. I wish I had been there. Simon, oh, Simon! Spit at him, Lucullus. Thumbs down for Simon! Fancy getting him alive, I wonder he didn't kill himself first like Cleopatra. This is a glorious day, I haven't had such fun in years."

The bronze horses tread quietly above the triumph-

ing multitudes. They too have been spoils of war, yet they stand here on the Arch of Nero dominating Rome. Time passes — passes — but the horses, calm and contained, move forward, dividing one minute from another and leaving each behind.

You should be still now, Roman populace. These are the decorations of the Penetralia, the holy Sanctuary which your soldiers have profaned. But the people jeer and scoff, and comment on the queer articles carried on the heads of the soldiers. Tragedy indeed! They see no tragedy, only an immense spectacle, unique and satisfying. The crowd clears its throat and spits and shouts "*Io triumphe! Io triumphe!*" against the cracking blare of brazen trumpets.

Slowly they come, the symbols of a beaten religion: the Golden Table for the Shew-Bread, the Silver Trumpets that sounded the Jubilee, the Seven-

Branched Candlestick, the very Tables of the Law which Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. Can Jupiter conquer these? Slowly they pass, glinting in the sunlight, staring in the light of day, mocked and exhibited. Lord God of Hosts, fall upon these people, send your thunders upon them, hurl the lightnings of your wrath against this multitude, raze their marble city so that not one stone remain standing. But the sun shines unclouded, and the holy vessels pass onward through the Campus Martius, through the Circus Flaminius, up the Via Sacra to the Capitol, and then . . . The bronze horses look into the brilliant sky, they trot slowly without moving, they advance slowly, one foot raised. There is always another step — one, and another. How many does not matter, so that each is taken.

The *spolia opima* have passed. The crowd holds its breath and quivers. Everyone is tiptoed up to

see above his neighbour; they sway and brace themselves in their serried ranks. Away, over the heads, silver eagles glitter, each one marking the passage of a legion. The "Victorious Legion" goes by, the "Indomitable Legion," the "Spanish Legion," and those with a crested lark on their helmets, and that other whose centurions are almost smothered under the shining reflections of the medallions fastened to their armour. Cohort after cohort, legion on the heels of legion, the glistening greaves rise and flash and drop and pale, scaling from sparkle to dullness in a series of rhythmic angles, constantly repeated. They swing to the tones of straight brass trumpets, they jut out and fall at the call of spiral bugles. Above them, the pointed shields move evenly, right to left — right to left. The horses curvet and prance, and shiver back, checked, on their haunches; the javelins of the horsemen are so many broad-ended sticks of flame.

Those are the eagles of the Imperial Guard, and behind are two golden chariots. "*Io triumphe!*" The roar drowns the trumpets and bugles, the clatter of the horses' hoofs is a mere rattle of sand ricocheting against the voice of welcoming Rome. The Emperor Vespasian rides in one chariot, in the other stands Titus. Titus, who has subdued Judea, who has humbled Jehovah, and brought the sacred vessels of the Lord God of Hosts back with him as a worthy offering to the people of Rome. Cheer, therefore, good people, you have the Throne of Heaven to recline upon; you are possessed of the awful majesty of the God of the Jews; beneath your feet are spread the emblems of the Most High; and your hands are made free of the sacred instruments of Salvation.

What god is that who falls before pikes and spears! Here is another god, his face and hands stained with vermilion, after the manner of the Capitoline Jupiter. His car is of ivory and gold, green plumes nod

over the heads of his horses, the military bracelets on his arms seem like circling serpents of bitter flame. The milk-white horses draw him slowly to the Capitol, step by step, along the Via Triumphalis, and step by step the old golden horses on the Arch of Nero tread down the hours of the lapsing day.

That night, forty elephants bearing candelabra light up the ranges of pillars supporting the triple portico of the Capitol. Forty illuminated elephants — and the light of their candles is reflected in the polished sides of the great horses, above, on the Arch of Nero, slowly trotting forward, stationary yet moving, in the soft night which hangs over Rome.

Pavanne to a Brass Orchestra

Water falls from the sky, and green-fanged lightning mouths the heavens. The Earth rolls upon itself, incessantly creating morning and evening. The moon

calls to the waters, swinging them forward and back, and the sun draws closer and as rhythmically recedes, advancing in the pattern of an ancient dance, making a figure of leaves and aridness. Harmony of chords and pauses, fugue of returning balances, canon and canon repeating the theme of Earth, Air, and Water.

A single cymbal-crash of Fire, and for an instant the concerted music ceases. But it resumes — Earth, Air, and Water, and out of it rise the metals, unconsumed. Brazen cymbals, trumpets of silver, bells of bronze. They mock at fire. They burn upon themselves and retain their entities. Not yet the flame which shall destroy them. They shall know all flames but one. They shall be polished and corroded, yet shall they persist and play the music which accompanies the strange ceremonious dance of the sun.

Constantinople

Empire of the East! Byzantium! Constantinople! The Golden City of the World. A crystal fixed in

aquamarines; a jewel-box set down in a seaside garden. All the seas are as blue as Spring lupins, and there are so many seas. Look where you please, forward, back, or down, there is water. The deep blue water of crisp ripples, the long light shimmer of flat undulations, the white glare, smoothing into purple, of a sun-struck ebb. The Bosphorus winds North to the Black Sea. The Golden Horn curves into the Sweet Waters. The edge of the city swerves away from the Sea of Marmora. Aquamarines, did I say? Sapphires, beryls, lapis-lazuli, amethysts, and felspar. Whatever stones there are, bluer than gentians, bluer than cornflowers, bluer than asters, bluer than periwinkles. So blue that the city must be golden to complement the water. A gold city, shimmering and simmering, starting up like mica from the green of lemon trees, and olives, and cypresses.

Gold! Gold! Walls and columns covered with

gold. Domes of churches resplendent with gold. Innumerable statues of "bronze fairer than pure gold," and courts paved with golden tiles. Beyond the white and rose-coloured walls of Saint Sophia, the city rounds for fourteen great miles; fourteen miles of onychite, and porphyry, and marble; fourteen miles of colonnades, and baths, and porticoes; fourteen miles of gay, garish, gaudy, glaring gold. Why, even the Imperial *triremes* in the harbour have gold embroidered gonfalons, and the dolphins, ruffling out of the water between them, catch the colour and dive, each a sharp cutting disk-edge of yellow flame.

It is the same up above, where statues spark like stars jutted from a mid-day sky. There are golden Emperors at every crossing, and golden Virgins crowding every church-front. And, in the centre of the great Hippodrome, facing the *triremes* and the leaping dolphins, is a fine chariot of Corinthian brass.

Four horses harnessed to a gilded *quadriga*. The horses pace evenly forward, in a moment they will be trampling upon space, facing out to sea on the currents of the morning breeze. But their heads are arched and checked, gracefully they pause, one leg uplifted, seized and baffled by the arrested movement. They are the horses of Constantine, brought from Rome, so people say, buzzing in the Augustaion. "Fine horses, hey?" "A good breed, Persia from the look of them, though they're a bit thick in the barrel for the horses they bring us from there." "They bring us their worst, most likely." "Oh, I don't know, we buy pretty well. Why, only the other day I gave a mint of money for a cargo of Egyptian maize." "Lucky dog, you'll make on that, with all the harvest here ruined by the locusts."

It is a pretty little wind which plays along the sides of the gilded horses, a coquettish little sea wind, blow-

ing and listing and finally dropping away altogether and going to sleep in a plane-tree behind the Hippodrome.

Constantinople is a yellow honey-comb, with fat bees buzzing in all its many-sided cells. Bees come over the flower-blue seas; bees humming from the Steppes of Tartary, from the long line of Nile-fed Egypt. Tush! What would you! Where there is gold there are always men about it; to steal it, to guard it, to sit and rot under its lotus-shining brilliance. The very army is woven of threads drawn from the edges of the world. Byzantines are merchantmen, they roll and flounder in the midst of gold coins, they tumble and wallow in money-baths, they sit and chuckle under a continuous money-spray. And ringed about them is the army, paid to shovel back the scattering gold pieces: Dalmatians with swords and arrows; Macedonians with silver

belts and gilt shields; Scholarii, clad in rose-coloured tunics; Varangians, shouldering double battle-axes. When they walk, the rattle of them can be heard pattering back from every wall and doorway. It clacks and cracks even in the Copper Market, above the clang of cooking pots and the wrangling whine of Jewish traders. Constantinople chatters, buzzes, screams, growls, howls, squeals, snorts, brays, croaks, screeches, crows, neighs, gabbles, purrs, hisses, brawls, roars, shouts, mutters, calls, in every sort of crochet and demi-semi-quaver, wavering up in a great contrapuntal murmur — adagio, maestoso, capriccioso, scherzo, staccato, crescendo, vivace, veloce, brio — brio — brio!! A racket of dissonance, a hubbub of harmony. Chords? Discords? Answer: Byzantium!

People pluck the strings of rebecks and psalteries; they shock the cords of lyres; they batter tin drums, and shatter the guts of kettle-drums when the Em-

peror goes to Saint Sophia to worship at an altar of precious stones fused into a bed of gold and silver, and, as he walks up the nave between the columns of green granite, and the columns of porphyry, under the golden lily on the Octagonal Tower, the bells pour their notes over the roofs, spilling them in single jets down on each side of the wide roofs. Drip — drip — drip — out of their hearts of beaten bronze, slipping and drowning in the noise of the crowds clustered below.

On the top of the Hippodrome, the bronze horses trot toward the lupin-coloured Sea of Marmora, slowly, without moving; and, behind them, the spokes of the *quadriga* wheels remain separate and single, with the blue sky showing between each one.

What a city is this, builded of gold and alabaster, with myrtle and roses strewn over its floors, and

doors of embossed silver opening upon golden trees where jewelled birds sing clock-work notes, and fountains flow from the beaks of silver eagles. All this splendour cooped within the fourteen miles of a single city, forsooth! In Britain, they sit under oaken beams; in France, they eat with hunting-knives; in Germany, men wear coats of their wives' weaving. In Italy — but there is a Pope in Italy! The bronze horses pause on the marble Hippodrome, and days blow over them, brushing their sides like wind.

It is May eleventh in Constantinople, and the Spring-blue sea shivers like a field of lupins run over by a breeze. Every tree and shrub spouted over every garden-wall flouts a chromatic sequence of greens. A long string of camels on the Bridge of Justinian moves, black and ostrich-like, against the sheen of water. A swallow sheers past the bronze

horses and drops among the pillars on top of the curve of the Hippodrome; the great cistern on the Spina reflects a speckless sky. It is race-day in Constantinople, and the town is turned out upon the benches of the Hippodrome, waiting for the procession to begin. "Hola! You fellows on the top tier, do you see anything?" "Nothing yet, but I hear music." "Music! Oh, Lord! I should think you did. Clear the flagged course there, the procession is coming." "Down in front. Sit down, you." "Listen. Oh, dear, I'm so fidgety. If the Green doesn't win, I'm out a fortune." "Keep still, will you, we can't hear the music, you talk so loud." "Here they come! Green! Green! Green! Drown those Blues over there. Oh, Green, I say!"

Away beyond, through the gates, flageolets are squealing, and trumpets are splitting their brass throats and choking over the sound. Patter — patter — patter — horses' hoofs on flagstones. They

are coming under the paved arch. There is the President of the Games in a tunic embroidered with golden palm-branches; there is the Emperor in his pearl-lappeted cap, and his vermilion buskins; and here are the racers — Green — Blue — driving their chariots, easily standing in their high-wheeled chariots. The sun whitens the knives in their girdles, the reins flash in the sun like ribbons of spun glass. Three-year-olds in the Green chariot, so black they are blue. Four blue-black horses, with the sheen of their flanks glistening like the grain of polished wood. The little ears point forward, their teeth tease the bits. They snort and jerk, and the chariot wheels quirk over an outstanding stone and jolt down, flat and rumbling. The Blue chariot-driver handles a team of greys, white as the storks who nest in the cemetery beyond the Moslem quarter. He gathers up his reins, and the horses fall back against the pole, clattering, then fling forward, meet the bit, rear up,

and swing inward, settling gradually into a nervous jigging as they follow round the course. "Blue! Blue! Go for him, Blue!" from the North Corner. "Hurrah for the Blue! Blue to Eternity!" Slowly the procession winds round the Spina, and the crowd stands up on the seats and yells and cheers and waves handkerchiefs, sixty thousand voices making such a noise that only the high screaming of the flageolets can be heard above it. The horses toss and twitch, the harness jingles, and the gilded eggs and dolphins on the Spina coruscate in versicoloured stars.

Above the Emperor's balcony, the bronze horses move quietly forward, and the sun outlines the great muscles of their lifted legs.

They have reached the Grand Stand again, and the chariots are shut and barred in their stalls. The multitude, rustling as though they were paper being

folded, settles down into their seats. The President drops a napkin, the bars are unlocked, and the chariots in a double rush take the straight at top speed, Blue leading, Green saving up for the turn at the curve. Round the three cones at the end, Blue on one wheel, Green undercutting him. Blue turns wide to right himself, takes the outside course and flashes up the long edge so that you cannot count two till he curves again. Down to the Green Corner, Blue's off horses slipping just before the cones, one hits the pole, loses balance and falls, drags a moment, catches his feet as the chariot slows for the circle, gathers, plunges, and lunges up and on, while the Greens on the benches groan and curse. But the black team is worse off, the inside near colt has got his leg over a trace. Green checks his animals, the horse kicks free, but Blue licks past him on the up way, and is ahead at the North turn by a wheel length. Green goes round, flogging to make up time. Two

eggs and dolphins gone, three more to go. The pace has been slow so far, now they must brace up. Bets run high, screamed out above the rumble of the chariots. "Ten on the Green." "Odds fifty for the Blue." "Double mine; those greys have him." "The blacks, the blacks, lay you a hundred to one the blacks beat." Down, round, up, round, down, so fast they are only dust puffs, one can scarcely see which is which. The horses are badly blown now, and the drivers yell to them, and thrash their churning flanks. The course is wet with sweat and blood, the wheels slide over the wet course. Green negotiates the South curve with his chariot sideways; Blue skids over to the flagged way and lames a horse on the stones. The Emperor is on his feet, staring through his emerald spy-glass. Once more round for the last egg and dolphin. Down for the last time, Blue's lame horse delays him, but he flays him with the whip and the Green Corner finds them abreast. The Greens on the seats burst

up standing. "Too far out! Well turned!" "The Green's got it!" "Well done, Hirpinus!" The Green driver disappears up the long side to the goal, waving his right hand, but Blue's lame horse staggers, stumbles, and goes down, settling into the dust with a moan. Vortex of dust, struggling horses, golden glitter of the broken chariot. "Overthrown, by the Holy Moses! And hurt too! Well, well, he did his best, that beast always looked skittish to me." "Is he dead, do you think? They've got the litter." "Most likely. Green! Green! See, they're crowning him. Green and the people! Ohhé! Green!"

Cool and imperturbable, the four great gilt horses slowly pace above the marble columns of the Grand Stand. They gaze out upon the lupin-blue water beyond the Southern curve. Can they see the Island of Corfu from up there, do you think? There are

vessels at the Island of Corfu waiting to continue a journey. The great horses trot forward without moving, and the dust of the race-track sifts over them and blows away.

Constantinople from the Abbey of San Stefano: bubbles of opal and amber thrust up in a distant sky, pigeon-coloured nebulæ closing the end of a long horizon. Tilting to the little waves of a harbour, the good ships *Aquila*, *Paradiso*, *Pellegrina*, leaders of a fleet of galleys: *dromi*, *hippogogi*, vessels carrying timber for turrets, strong vessels holding mangonels. Proud vessels under an ancient Doge, keeping Saint John's Day at the Abbey of San Stefano, within sight of Constantinople.

Knights in blue and crimson inlaid armour clank up and down the gang-planks of the vessels. Flags and banners flap loosely at the mast-heads. There is the banner of Baldwin of Flanders, the standard

of Louis of Blois, the oriflamme of Boniface of Montferrat, the pennon of Hugh, Count of Saint Paul, and last, greatest, the gonfalon of Saint Mark, dripped so low it almost touches the deck, with the lion of Venice crumpled in its windless folds.

Saint John's Day, and High Mass in the Abbey of San Stefano. They need God's help who would pass over the double walls and the four hundred towers of Constantinople. *Te Deum Laudamus!* The armoured knights make the sign of the cross, lightly touching the crimson and azure devices on their breasts with mailed forefingers.

South wind to the rescue; that was a good mass. "Boatswain, what's the direction of that cat's-paw, veering round a bit? Good."

Fifty vessels making silver paths in the Summer-blue Sea of Marmora. Fifty vessels passing the Sweet Waters, blowing up the Bosphorus.

Strike your raucous gongs, City of Byzantium. Run about like ants between your golden palaces. These vessels are the chalices of God's wrath. The spirit of Christ walking upon the waters. Or is it anti-Christ? This is the true Church. Have we not the stone on which Jacob slept, the rod which Moses turned into a serpent, a portion of the bread of the Last Supper? We are the Virgin's chosen abiding place; why, the picture which Saint Luke painted of her is in our keeping. We have pulled the sun's rays from the statue of Constantine and put up the Cross instead. Will that bring us nothing? Cluster round the pink and white striped churches, throng the alabaster churches, fill the naves with a sound of chanting. Strike the terror-gongs and call out the soldiers, for even now the plumed knights are disembarking, and the snarling of their trumpets mingles with the beating of the gongs.

The bronze horses on the Hippodrome, harnessed to the gilded *quadriga*, step forward slowly. They proceed in a measured cadence. They advance without moving. There are lights and agitation in the city, but the air about the horses has the violet touch of night.

Now, now, you crossbowmen and archers, you go first. Stand along the gunwales and be ready to jump. Keep those horses still there, don't let them get out of order. Lucky we thought of the hides. Their damnable Greek fire can't hurt us now. Up to the bridge, knights. Three of you abreast, on a level with the towers. What's a shower of arrows against armour! An honourable dint blotting out the head of a heron, half a plume sheared off a helmet so that it leers cock-eyed through the press. Tut! Tut! Little things, the way of war. Jar, jolt, mud

— the knights clash together like jumbled chess-men, then leap over the bridges. Confusion — contusion — raps — bangs — lurches — blows — battle-axes thumping on tin shields; bolts bumping against leathern bucklers. "A Boniface to the Rescue!" "Baldwin forever!" "Viva San Marco!" Such a pounding, pummelling, pitching, pointing, piercing, pushing, pelting, poking, panting, punching, parrying, pulling, prodding, puking, piling, passing, you never did see. Stones pour out of the mangonels; arrows fly thick as mist. Swords twist against swords, bill-hooks batter bill-hooks, staves rattle upon staves. One, two, five men up a scaling ladder. Chop down on the first, and he rolls off the ladder with his skull in two halves; rip up the bowels of the second, he drips off the ladder like an overturned pail. But the third catches his adversary between the legs with a pike and pitches him over as one would toss a truss of hay. Way for the three ladder men!

Their feet are on the tower, their plumes flower, argent and gold, above the muck of slaughter. From the main truck of the ships there is a constant seeping of Venetians over the walls of Constantinople. They flow into the city, they throw themselves upon the beleaguered city. They smash her defenders, and crash her soldiers to mere bits of broken metal.

Byzantines, Copts, Russians, Persians, Armenians, Moslems, the great army of the Franks is knocking at the gates of your towers. Open the gates. Open, open, or we will tear down your doors, and breach the triple thickness of your walls. Seventeen burning boats indeed, and have the Venetians no boat-hooks? They make pretty fireworks to pleasure our knights of an evening when they come to sup with Doge Dandolo. At night we will sleep, but in the morning we will kill again. Under your tents, helmeted knights; into your cabin, old Doge. The

stars glitter in the Sea of Marmora, and above the city, black in the brilliance of the stars, the great horses of Constantine advance, pausing, blotting their shadows against the sprinkled sky.

From June until September, the fracas goes on. The chanting of masses, the shouting of battle songs, sweep antiphonally over Constantinople. They blend and blur, but what is that light tinkling? Tambourines? What is that snapping? Castanets? What is that yellow light in the direction of the Saracen mosque? My God! Fire! Gold of metals, you have met your king. Ringed and crowned, he takes his place in the jewelled city. Gold of fire mounted upon all the lesser golds. The twin tongues of flame flaunt above the housetops. Banners of scarlet, spears of saffron, spikes of rose and melted orange. What are the little flags of the Crusaders to these! They clamoured for pay and won the

elements. Over the Peninsula of Marmora it comes. The whips of its fire-thongs lash the golden city. A conflagration half a league wide. Magnificent churches, splendid palaces, great commercial streets, are burning. Golden domes melt and liquefy, and people flee from the dripping of them. Lakes of gold lie upon the pavements; pillars crack and tumble, making dams and bridges over the hot gold. Two days, two nights, the fire rages, and through the roar of it the little cries of frightened birds come thin and pitiful. Earth pleading with fire. Earth begging quarter of the awful majesty of fire. The birds wheel over Constantinople; they perch upon the cool bronze horses standing above the Hippodrome. The quiet horses who wait and advance. This is not their fire, they trample on the luminousness of flames, their strong hind legs plant them firmly on the marble coping. They watch the falling of the fire, they gaze upon the ruins spread about

them, and the pungence of charred wood brushes along their tarnished sides like wind.

The Franks have made an Emperor and now the Greeks have murdered him. The Doge asks for fifty *centenaria* in gold to pay his sailors. Who will pay, now that the Emperor is dead? Declare a siege and pay yourselves, Count, and Marquis, and Doge. Set your ships bow to stern, a half a league of them. Sail up the Golden Horn, and attack the walls in a hundred places. You fail to-day, but you will win to-morrow. Bring up your battering-rams and ballistæ; hurl stones from your mangonels; run up your scaling ladders and across your skin bridges. Winter is over and Spring is in your veins. Your blood mounts like sap, mount up the ladder after it. Two ships to a tower, and four towers taken. Three gates battered in. The city falls. Cruel saints, you have betrayed your votaries. Even

the relic of the Virgin's dress in the Panhagia of Blachernæ has been useless. The knights enter Byzantium, and their flickering pennants are the flamelets of a new conflagration. Fire of flesh burning in the blood of the populace. They would make the sign of the cross, would they, so that the Franks may spare them? But the sap is up in the Frankish veins, the fire calls for fuel. Blood burns to whe will ignite it. The swords itch for the taste of entrails, the lances twitch at sight of a Byzantine. Feed, Fire! Here are men, and women, and children, full of blood for the relish of your weapons. Spring sap, how many women! Good Frankish seed for the women of Byzantium. Blood and lust, you shall empty yourselves upon the city. Your swords shall exhaust themselves upon these Greeks. Your hands shall satisfy themselves with gold. Spit at the priests. This is the Greek church, not ours. Grab the sacred furniture of the churches, fornicate

upon the high altar of Saint Sophia, and load the jewels upon the donkeys you have driven into the church to receive them. Old pagan Crusaders, this is the Orgy of Spring! Lust and blood, the birthright of the world.

The bright, shining horses tread upon the clean coping of the Hippodrome, and the Sea of Marmora lies before them like a lupin field run over by a breeze.

What are you now, Constantinople? A sacked city; and the tale of your plundering shall outdo the tale of your splendours for wonder. Three days they pillage you. Burmese rubies rattle in the pockets of common soldiers. The golden tree is hacked to bits and carried off by crossbowmen. An infantry sergeant hiccoughs over the wine he drinks from an altar cup. The knights live in palaces and

dip their plumes under the arch of the Emperor's bed-chamber.

In the Sea of Marmora, the good ships *Aquila, Paradiso, Pellegrina* swing at anchor. The *dromi* and *hippogogi* ride free and empty. They bob to the horses high above them on the Hippodrome. They dance to the rhythmic beat of hammers floating out to them from the city of Constantinople.

Throb — throb — a dying pulse counts its vibrations. Throb — throb — and each stroke means a gobbet of gold. They tear it down from the walls and doors, they rip it from ceilings and pry it up from floors. They chip it off altars, they rip it out of panels, they hew it from obelisks, they gouge it from enamels. This is a death dance, a whirligig, a skeleton city footing a jig, a tarantella quirked to hammer-stroke time; a corpse in motley ogling a crime. Tap — tap — tap — goes the pantomime.

Grinning devils watch church cutting the throat

of church. Chuckling gargoyles in France, in Britain, rub their stomachs and squeeze themselves together in an ecstasy of delight. Ho! Ho! Marquis Boniface, Count Hugh, Sieur Louis. What plunder do you carry home? What relics do you bring to your Gothic cathedrals? The head of Saint Clement? The arm of John the Baptist? A bit of the wood of the True Cross? Statues are only so much metal, but these are treasures worth fighting for. Fighting, quotha! Murdering, stealing. The Pope will absolve you, only bring him home a tear of Christ, and you will see. A tear of Christ! *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!* Oh, pitiful world! Pitiful knights in your inlaid armour! Pitiful Doge, preening himself in the Palace of Blachernæ!

Above the despoiled city, the Corinthian horses trot calmly forward, without moving, and the *quadriga* behind them glitters in the sun.

People have blood, but statues have gold, and silver, and bronze. Melt them! Melt them! "Gee! Haw!" Guide the oxen carefully. Four oxen to drag the head of Juno to the furnace. White oxen to transport Minerva; fawn-coloured oxen for the colossal Hercules of Lysippus. Pour them into the furnaces so that they run out mere soft metal ripe for coining. Two foot-sergeants get as much as a horse-sergeant, and two horse-sergeants as much as a knight. Flatten out Constantinople. Raze her many standing statues, shave the Augustaion to a stark stretch of paving-stones. Melt the bones of beauty, indomitable Crusaders, and pay the Venetians fifty thousand silver marks as befits an honest company of dedicated gentlemen.

"The Doge wants those horses, does he? Just as they are, unmelted? Holy Saint Christopher, what for? Pity he didn't speak sooner, I sent Walter the

Smith to cut the gold off them this morning, but it sticks like the very devil and he hasn't done much. Well, well, the Doge can have them. A man with a whim must be given way to, particularly when he owns all the ships. How about that gilded chariot?"

"Oh, he can't manage that. Just the horses. You were in a mighty hurry with that cutting, it seems to me. You've made them look like zebras, and he'll not like that. He's a bit of a connoisseur in horse-flesh, even if he does live in the water. Wants to mate them to the dolphins probably, and go a-campaigning astride of fishes. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Steady there, lower the horses carefully, they are for the Doge." One — one — one — one — down from the top of the Hippodrome. One — one — one — one — on ox-carts rumbling toward the water's edge, in boats rowing over the lupin-coloured sea. Great horses, trot calmly on your sides, roll quietly to the heaving of the bright sea. Above you, sails go up,

anchors are weighed. The gonfalon of Saint Mark flings its extended lion to the freshening wind. To Venice, *Aquila, Paradiso, Pellegrina,* with your attendant *dromi!* To Venice! Over the running waves of the Spring-blue sea.

Beneath a Crooked Rainbow

As the seasons of Earth are Fire, so are the seasons of men. The departure of Fire is a change, and the coming of Fire is a greater change. Demand not that which is over, but acclaim what is still to come. So the Earth builds up her cities, and falls upon them with weeds and nettles; and Water flows over the orchards of past centuries. On the sand-hills shall apple trees flourish, and in the water-courses shall be gathered a harvest of plums. Earth, Air, and Water abide in fluctuation. But man, in the days between his birth and dying, fashions metals to himself, and they are without heat or cold. In the Winter solstice, they are

not altered like the Air, nor hardened like the Water, nor shrivelled like the Earth, and the heats of Summer bring them no burgeoning. Therefore are metals outside the elements. Between melting and melting they are beyond the Water, and apart from the Earth, and severed from the Air. Fire alone is of them, and master. Withdrawn from Fire, they dwell in isolation.

Venice

Venice anadyomene! City of reflections! A cloud of rose and violet poised upon a changing sea. City of soft waters washing marble stairways, of feet moving over stones with the continuous sound of slipping water. Floating, wavering city, shot through with the silver threads of water, woven with the green-gold of flowing water, your marble Rivas block the tides as they sweep in over the Lagoons, your towers fling golden figures of Fortune into the carnation sky at sunset, the polished marble

of the walls of old palaces burns red to the flaring torches set in cressets before your doors. Strange city, belonging neither to earth nor water, where the slender spandrels of vines melt into the carvings of arched windows, and crabs ferry themselves through the moon-green water rippling over the steps of a decaying church.

Beautiful, faded city. The sea wind has dimmed your Oriental extravagance to an iris of rose, and amber, and lilac. You are dim and reminiscent like the frayed hangings of your State Chambers, and the stucco of your house-fronts crumbles into the canals with a gentle dripping which no one notices.

A tabernacle set in glass, an ivory ornament resting upon a table of polished steel. It is the surface of the sea, spangled, crinkled, engine-turned to whorls of blue and silver, ridged in waves of flower-green and gold. Sequins of gold skip upon the

water, crocus-yellow flames dart against white smoothness and disappear, wafers of many colours float and intermingle. The Lagoons are a white fire burning to the blue band of the Lido, restlessly shifting under the cool, still, faint peaks of the Euganean Hills.

Where is there such another city? She has taken all the Orient to herself. She has treated with Barbarossa, with Palæologus, with the Pope, the Tzar, the Caliph, the Sultan, and the Grand Khan. Her returning vessels have discharged upon the mole metals and jewels, pearls from the Gulf of Oman, silks from Damascus, camel's-hair fabrics from Erzeroum. The columns of Saint John of Acre have been landed on her jetties, and the great lions from the Piræus. Now she rests and glitters, holding her treasures lightly, taking them for granted, chatting among the fringes, and tinkling sherbet spoons of an evening in the dark shadow of the Campanile.

Up from the flickering water, beyond the laced colonnades of the Ducal Palace — golden bubbles, flung out upon a sky of ripe blue. Arches of white and scarlet flowers, pillars of porphyry, columns of jasper, open loggias of deep-green serpentine flaked with snow. In the architraves, stones chipped and patterned, the blues studded with greens, the greens circling round yellows, reds of every depth, clear purples, heliotropes clouded into a vague white. Above them, all about them, the restless movement of carven stone; it is involuted and grotesque, it is acanthus leaves and roses, it is palm branches and vine tendrils, it is feathers and the tails of birds, all blowing on a day of *scirocco*. Angels rise among the swirling acanthus leaves, angels and leaves weaving an upstarting line, ending in the great star of Christ struck upon the edge of a golden dome. Saint Mark's Church, gazing down the length of the cheq-

uered Piazza, thrusting itself upon the black and white pavement, rising out of the flat tiles in a rattle of colours, soaring toward the full sky like a broken prism whirling at last into the gold bubbles of its five wide domes. The Campanile mounts above it, but the Campanile is only brick, even if it has a pointed top which you cannot see without lying on your back. The pigeons can fly up to it, but the pigeons prefer the angles and hollows of the sculptured church.

Saint Mark's Church — and over the chief arch, among the capitals of foaming leaves and bent grasses, trample four great horses. They are of gold, of gilding so fine that it has not faded. They are tarnished here and there, but their fair colour overcomes the green corroding and is a blinding to the eyes in sunshine. Four magnificent, muscular horses, lightly stepping upon traceried columns, one forefoot raised to launch them forward. They stand over the

high door, caught back a moment before springing, held an instant to the perfection of a movement about to begin, and the pigeons circle round them brushing against their sides like wind.

But, dear me, Saint Mark's is the only thing in the Piazza that is not talking, and walking to and fro, and cheapening shoe buckles at a stall, and playing *panfil* and *bassetta* at little round tables by the wall, and singing to guitars, and whistling to poodles, and shouting to acquaintances, and giving orders to servants, and whispering a scandal behind fans, and carrying tomatoes in copper pans, and flying on messages, and lying to creditors, and spying on suspects, and colliding with masked loungers, and crying out the merits of fried fish, caught when the tide comes leaping through the Tre Porti. A dish of tea at a coffee-house, and then cross one leg over the other and wait. She will be here by seven o'clock,

and a faithful *cicisbeo* has her charms to muse upon until then. Ah, Venice, chattering, flattering, occupied Venice, what are the sculptured angels and golden horses to you. You are far too busy to glance at them. They are chiefly remarkable as curiosities, for whoever saw a real angel, and as to a real horse — "I saw a stuffed one for a *soldo*, the other day, in the Campo San Polo. *Un elephanto*, Gastone, taller than my shoulder and the eyes were made of glass, they would pass for perfect any day."

Ah, the beautiful palaces, with their gateways of gilded iron frilled into arms and coronets, quilled into shooting leaves and tendrils, filled with rosettes, fretted by heraldic emblems! Ah, the beautiful taste, which wastes no time on heavy stone, but cuts flowers, and foliage, and flourishes, and ribbons out of — stucco! Bows of stucco glued about a ceiling

by Tiepolo, and ranged underneath, frail white-and-gold, rose-and-gold, green-and-gold chairs, fair consoles of polished lacquer supporting great mirrors of Murano. Hangings of blue silk with silver fringes, behind your folds, la Signora Benzona accords a favour to the Cavalier Giuseppe Trevis. Upon a salmon-coloured sofa striped with pistachio-green, the Cavaliera Contarini flirts with both her *cicisbei* at once, in a charming impartiality. Kisses? Ah, indeed, certainly kisses. Hands tickling against hands? But assuredly, one for each of you. The heel of a left slipper caught against a buckled shoe, the toe of a right foot pressed beneath a broader sole; but the toll is finished. "Tut! Tut! Gentlemen! With the other present! Have you no delicacy? To-night perhaps, after the Ridotto, we will take a *giro* in my gondola as far as Malamocco, Signor Bianchi. And to-morrow, Carlo Pin, will you go to church with me? There is something in the tones of

an organ, I know not what exactly, but it has its effect."

"You rang, *Illustrissima?*" "Of course I rang, Stupid, did you think it was the cat?" "Your nobility desires?" "The time, Blockhead, what is the time?" "Past seven, *Illustrissima.*" "Ye Gods, how time passes when one sleeps! Bring my chocolate at once, and call Giannina." With a yawn, the lady rises, just as the sun fades away from the flying figure of Fortune on the top of the Dogana. "Candles, Moracchio." And the misty mirrors prick and pulsate with reflections of blurred flame. Flame-points, and behind them the puce-coloured curtains of a bed; an escritoire with feathered pens and Spanish wax; a table with rouge-pots and powder-boxes; a lady, naked as a Venus, slipping into a silk shift. In the misty mirrors, she is all curves and colour, all slenderness and tapering, all languor and vivacity. Even

Giannina murmurs, "*Che bella Madonna mia!*" as she pulls the shift into place. But the door is ajar, a mere harmless crack to make a fuss about. "Only one eye, *Cara Mia*, I assure you the other saw nothing but the panel. I ask for so much, and I have only taken the pleasure of one little eye. I must kiss them, *Signora Bellissima*, two little red berries, like the fruit of the *potentillas* in the grass at Sant' Elena. *Musica! Musica!* The barque of music is coming down the canal. Sit on my knee a moment, the Casino can wait; and after you have won a thousand *zecchini*, will you be a second Danae and go with me to the early morning market? Then you shall come home and sleep all day in the great bed among the roses I shall buy for you. With your gold? Perhaps, my dearest tease, the luck has deserted me lately. But there are ways of paying, are there not, and I am an honourable man."

The great horses of Saint Mark's trot softly forward on their sculptured pedestals, without moving. Behind them, the glass of the arched window is dark, but the Piazza is a bowl of lights, a tambourine of little bell-stroke laughter. The golden horses step forward, dimly shimmering in the light of the lamps below, and the pigeons sleep quietly on the stands at their feet.

Green Lion of Saint Mark upon your high pedestal! Winged Lion of Saint Mark, your head turned over the blinding Lagoons to the blue Lido, your tail pointing down the sweeping flow of the Grand Canal! What do you see, Green Lion of the Patron Saint? Boats? Masts? Quaint paintings on the broad bows of *bragozzi*, orange sails contra-crossing one another over tossing ripples. Gondolas tipping to the oars of the *barcajuoli*, slipping under the Ponte

della Paglia, dipping between sardine *topi*, skipping past the Piazzetta, curving away to the Giudecca, where it lies beyond the crystal pinnacles of Santa Maria della Salute and San Giorgio Maggiore which has the lustre of roses.

What do you smell, Lion? Boiling hot chestnuts, fried cuttles, fried puffs of pastry; the pungent odour of salt water and of dead fish; the nostalgic aroma of sandal-wood and myrrh, of musk, of leopard skins and the twin tusks of elephants.

And you, great Lion of the Ducal Palace, what goes on at your feet? People knotted together or scattering, pattering over the old stones in impertinent satin slippers, flippantly tapping the pavement with red heels. Whirls of people circle like the pigeons, knots of people spot the greyness of the stones, ribbons of people file along the colonnades, rayed lines of people between the Procuratie stripe the pavement sideways, criss-cross, at oblique angles.

Spangles snap and fade; gems glitter. A gentleman in a buttercup-coloured coat goes by with a bouquet. A sea-green gown brocaded with cherry and violet stays an instant before a stall to buy a packet of ambergris. Pilgrims with staffs and cockles knock the stones as they shuffle along, a water-carrier shouts out a song. A scarlet sacristan jingles his keys; purple robes of justices saunter at ease. Messer Goldoni hustles by to a rehearsal, and three famous *castrati*, i Signori Pacchierotti, Aprili, Rubenelli, rustle their mantles and adjust their masks, ogling the ladies with gold lorgnons. Blind men sniffle into flageolets, marionette men hurry on to a distant Campo in a flurry of cotton streamers. If Venice is a flowing of water, it is also a flowing of people. All Europe runs into this wide square. There is Monsieur Montesquieu, just from France, taking notes on the sly; there is Mrs. Piozzi, from England, with an eye to everything, even chicken-coops; Herr Goethe,

from the Court at Weimar, trying to overcome a fit of mental indigestion; Madame Vigée le Brun, questioning the merit of her work and that of Rosalba Carriera. You have much to watch, Lion, the whole earth cannot match the pageant of this great square, in the limpid sun-shot air, between the towering Campanile and the blaze of Saint Mark's angels. Star-fish patterns, jelly-fish rounds of colour, if the sea quivers with variety so does the Piazza. But above, on the façade of the jewelled church, the horses do not change. They stand vigorous and immovable, stepping lightly as though poised upon glass. Metal horses set upon shifting shards of glass, and the soft diphthongs of the Venetian dialect float over them like wind.

There are two Venices, the one we walk upon, and the one which wavers up to us inverted from the water of the canals. The silver prow of a gondola

winds round a wall, and in the moss-brown water another gondola joins it, bottom to bottom, with the teeth of the prow infinitely repeated. A cypress closes the end of a *rio*, and driven into the thick water another cypress spindles beneath us, and the wake of our boat leaves its foliage cut to tatters as it passes on. We plough through the veined pinks and subdued scarlets of the façades of palaces; we sheer a path through a spotted sky and blunt the tip of a soaring campanile. Are we swimming in the heavens, turned legend and constellation? Truly it seems so. "How you go on, Cavalier, certainly you are a foreigner to notice such things. The Lido, Giuseppe. I have a nostalgia for flowers to-day, and besides, abroad so early in the afternoon — what shocking style! The custom of the country, my dear Sir, here we go to bed by sunlight as you will see."

Sweep out of the broad canal, turn to the hanging snow summits. Oh, the beautiful silver light, the

blue light shimmering with silver. The clear sunlight on rose brick and amber marble. The sky so pale it is white, so bright it is yellow, so cloudless it is blue. Oh, the shafts of sapphire striping the wide water, the specks of gold dancing along it, the diamond roses opening and shutting upon its surface! Some one is singing in a distant boat:

"*Amanti, ci vuole costanza in amor'*

Amando,

Penando,

Si speri, si, si."

The lady shrugs her shoulders. "These fishermen are very droll. What do the *canaglia* know about love. Breeding, yes, that is certainly their affair, but love! *Più presto,* Giuseppe. How the sun burns!" Rock over the streaked Lagoon, gondola, pock the blue strips with white, shock purple shadows through the silver strata, set blocks of iris cannoning against gold. This is the rainbow over which we are float-

ing, and the heart-shaped city behind us is a reliquary of old ivory laid upon azure silk. Your hand, Signor the Foreigner, be careful lest she wet those fine French stockings, they cost I do not know how much a pair. Now run away across the Lido, gathering violets and periwinkles. The lady has a whim for a *villeggiatura*, and why not? Those scarlet pomegranate blossoms will look well in her hair to-night at the opera. But one cannot linger long, already the Dolomites are turning pink, and there is a whole night ahead of us to be cajoled somehow. A mile away from Venice and it is too far. "*Felicissima notte!*" Wax candles shine in the windows. The little stars of the gondola lanterns glide between dark walls. Broken moonlight shivers in the canals. And the masks come out, thronging the streets and squares with a chequer-work of black cloaks and white faces. Little white faces floating like pond-lilies above the water. Floating faces adrift over unfathomable

depths. Have you ever heard the words, *Libertà, Indipendenza, e Eguaglianza?* "What stuff and nonsense! Of course I have read your great writer, Rousseau; I cried my heart out over '*La Nouvelle Héloïse*,' but in practice! Wake my servants, the lazy fellows are always asleep, you will find them curled up on the stairs most likely. It is time we went to the *Mendicanti* to hear the oratorio. Ah, but those poor orphans sing with a charm! It makes one weep to hear them, only the old *Maestro di Capella* will beat time with his music on the grill. It is quite ridiculous, they could go through it perfectly without him. *Misericordia!* The red light! That is the gondola of the Supreme Tribunal taking some poor soul to the Piombi; God protect him! But it does not concern us, my friend. *Ridiamo a duetto!*" Little tinkling drops from the oars of the boatmen, little tinkling laughter wafted across the moonlight.

Four horses parading in front of a splendid church. Four ancient horses with ears pointed forward, listening. One foot is raised, they advance without moving. To what do they listen? To the serenades they have heard so often? *Cavatine*, *canzonette*, dance songs, hymns, for six hundred years the songs of Venice have drifted past them, lightly, as the wings of pigeons. And month by month the old moon has sailed over them, as she did in Constantinople, as she did in Rome.

Saint Stephen's Day, and the Carnival! For weeks now Venice will be amused. Folly to think of anything but fun. Toot the fifes! Bang the drums! Did you ever see anything so jolly in all your life before? Keep your elbows to your sides, there isn't room to square them. "My! What a flare! Rockets in broad daylight! I declare they make

the old horses of Saint Mark's blush pink when they burst. Thirsty? So am I, what will you have? Wine or oranges? Don't jostle so, old fellow, we can look in the window as well as you. See that apothecary's stall, isn't that a gay festoon? Curse me, if it isn't made of leeches; what will these shopkeepers do next! That mask has a well-turned ankle. Good evening, my charmer. You are as beautiful as a parrot, as white as linen, as light as a rabbit. Ay! O-o-h! The she-camel! She aimed her *confetti* right at my eye. Come on, Tito, let's go and see them behead the bull. Hold on a minute though, somebody's pulling my cloak. Just one little squeeze, Beauty, you shouldn't tweak a man's cloak if you don't want to be squeezed. You plump little pudding, you little pecking pigeon, I'll get more next time. Wow! Here comes Arlecchino. Push back, push back, the comedians are coming. Stow in your fat belly, *'lustrissimo*, you take up room enough for two."

Somebody beats a gong, and three drummers cleave a path through the crowd. Bang! *Bang!* BANG! So loud it splits the hearing. Mattachino leaps down the path. He is in white, with red lacings and red shoes. On his arm is a basket of eggs. Right, left, into the crowd, skim the eggs. Duck — jump — it is no use. Plump, on some one's front; pat, against some one's hat. The eggs crack, and scented waters run out of them, filling the air with the sweet smells of musk and bergamot. But here is a wheel of colours rolling down the path. Clown! Clown! It is Arlecchino, in his patched coat. It was green and he has botched it with red, or is it yellow, or possibly blue. It is hard to tell, he turns so fast. Three somersaults, and he comes up standing, and makes a long nose, and sweeps off his hat with the hare's fud, and glares solemnly into the eyes of a gentleman in spectacles. "Sir," says Arlecchino, "have you by chance a toothache? I can tell you

how to cure it. Take an apple, cut it into four equal parts, put one of these into your mouth, and thrust your head into an oven until the apple is baked. I swear on my honour you will never have the tooth-ache again." Zip! Sizz! No use in the cane. A pirouette and he is away again. A hand-spring, a double cut-under, and the parti-coloured rags are only a tag bouncing up out of surging black mantles. But there is something more wonderful yet. Set your faces to the Piazzetta, people; push, slam, jam, to keep your places. "A balloon is going up from the Dogana del Mare, a balloon like a moon or something else starry. A meteor, a comet, I don't really know what; it looks, so they say, like a huge apricot, or a pear — yes, that's surely the thing — blushing red, mellow yellow, a fruit on the wing, garlanded with streamers and tails, all a-whirl and a-flutter. Cut the string and she sails, till she lands in the gutter." "How do you know she lands in the gutter,

Booby?" "Where else should she land, unless in the sea?" "You're a fool, I suppose you sat up all night writing that doggerel." "Not at all, it is an improvisation." "Here, keep back, you can't push past me with your talk. Oh! Look! Look!"

That is a balloon. It rises slowly — slowly — above the Dogana. It wavers, dips, and poises; it mounts in the silver air, it floats without direction; suspended in movement, it hangs, a clear pear of red and yellow, opposite the melting, opal-tinted city. And the reflection of it also floats, perfect in colour but cooler, perfect in outline but more vague, in the glassy water of the Grand Canal. The blue sky sustains it; the blue water encloses it. Then balloon and reflection swing gently seaward. One ascends, the other descends. Each dwindles to a speck. Ah, the semblance is gone, the water has nothing; but the sky focusses about a point of fire, a formless iridescence sailing higher, become a mere burning,

until that too is absorbed in the brilliance of the clouds.

You cheer, people, but you do not know for what. A beautiful toy? Undoubtedly you think so. Shout yourselves hoarse, you who have conquered the sea, do you underestimate the air? Joke, laugh, purblind populace. You have been vouchsafed an awful vision, and you do nothing but clap your hands.

That is over, and here is Pantalone calling to you. "Going — going — I am selling my furniture. Two dozen chairs of fine holland; fourteen tables of almond paste; six majolica mattresses full of scrapings of haycocks; a semolina bedcover; six truffled cushions; two pavilions of spider-web trimmed with tassels made from the moustaches of Swiss door-keepers. Oh! The Moon! The Moon! The good little yellow moon, no bigger than an omelet of eight eggs. Come, I will throw in the moon. A quarter-ducat for the moon, good people. Take your opportunity."

Great gold horses, quietly stepping above the little mandarin figures, strong horses above the whirling porcelain figures, are the pigeons the only birds in Venice? Have the swallows told you nothing, flying from the West?

The bells of Saint Mark's Church ring midnight. The carnival is over.

In the deserted square, the pavement is littered with feathers, *confetti*, orange-peel, and pumpkin-seeds. But the golden horses on the balcony over the high door trot forward, without moving, and the shadow of the arch above them is thrown farther and farther forward as the moon drops toward the Lagoon.

Bronze armies marching on a sea-shell city. Slanted muskets filing over the passes of tall Alps. Who is this man who leads you, carven in new bronze,

supple as metal still cooling, firm as metal from a fresh-broken mold? A bright bronze general heading armies. The tread of his grenadiers is awful, continuous. How will it be in the streets of the glass city? These men are the flying letters of a new gospel. They are the tablets of another law. Twenty-eight, this general! Ah, but the metal is well compounded. He has been victorious in fourteen pitched battles and seventy fights; he has taken five hundred field pieces, and two thousand of heavy calibre; he has sent thirty millions back to the treasury of France. The Kings of Naples and Sardinia write him friendly letters; the Pope and the Duke of Parma weary themselves with compliments. The English have retired from Genoa, Leghorn, and Corsica.

Little glass masks, have you heard nothing of this man? What of the new French ambassador, Citizen Lallemont? You have seen his gondoliers

and the *tricolore* cockade in their caps? It is a puzzling business, but you can hardly expect us to be alarmed, we have been a republic for centuries. Still, these new ideas are intriguing, they say several gentlemen have adopted them. "Alvise Pisani, my Dear, and Abbate Colalto, also Bragadin, and Soranza, and Labbia. Oh, there was much talk about it last night. Such strange notions! But the cockade is very pretty. I have the ribbon, and I am going to make a few. Signora Fontana gave me the pattern."

Columbus discovered America. Ah, it was then you should have made your cockades. Is it Bonaparte or the Cape of Good Hope which has compassed your destiny? Little porcelain figures, can you stand the shock of bronze?

No, evidently. The quills of the Senate secretaries are worn blunt, writing note after note to the General of the Armies. But still he marches for-

ward, and his soldiers, dressed as peasants, have invaded Breschia and Bergamo. And what a man! Never satisfied. He must have this — that — and other things as well. He must have guns, cannon, horses, mules, food, forage. What is all this talk of a Cisalpine Republic? The Senate wavers like so many sea anemones in an advancing tide. Ascension Day is approaching. Shall the Doge go in the *Bucentoro* to wed the sea "in token of real and perpetual dominion"? The Senate dictates, the secretaries write, and the *Arsenalotti* polish the brasses of the *Bucentoro* and wait. Brightly shine the overpolished brasses of the *Bucentoro*, but the ships in the Arsenal are in bad repair and the crews wanting.

It is Holy Saturday in Venice, and solemn processions march to the churches. The slow chanting of choirs rises above the floating city, but in the Citizen Lallemont's apartments is a jangling of spurred heels, a clanking of cavalry sabres. General

Junot arrived in the small hours of the night. Holy Saturday is nothing to a reformed Frenchman; the General's business will not wait, he must see the Signory at once. Desert your churches, convene the College in haste. A bronze man cannot be opposed by a Senate of glass. Is it for fantasy that so many people are wearing the *tricolore*, or is it politeness to the visiting general? But what does he say? French soldiers murdered! Nonsense, a mere street row between Bergamese. But Junot thunders and clanks his sabre. A sword is a terrible thing in a cabinet of biscuit figurines. Let that pass. He has gone. But Venice is shaken. The stately palaces totter on their rotting piles, the *campi* buzz with voices, the Piazza undulates to a gesticulating multitude. Only the pigeons wheel unconcernedly about the Campanile, and the great horses stand, poised and majestic, beneath the mounting angels of Saint Mark's Church.

Ascension Day draws nearer. The brasses of the *Bucentoro* shine like gold. Surely the Doge will not desert his bride; or has the jilt tired of her long subjection? False water, upon your breast rock many navies, how should you remain true to a ship which fears to wet its keel. The *Bucentoro* glitters in the Arsenal, she blazes with glass and gilding drawn up safely on a runway of dry planks, while over the sea, beyond the Lido, rises the spark of sails. The vessel is hull down, but the tiers of canvas lift up, one after the other: skysails, royals, topgallantsails, topsails, mainsails, and at last, the woodwork. Then gleaming ports, then streaming water flashed from a curved bow. A good ship, but she flys the *tricolore*. This is no wedding barge, there is no winged lion on that flag. There is no music, no choir singing hymns. Men run to and fro in San Nicolo Fort, peering through spy-glasses. Ah, she will observe the rules,

the skysails come down, then the royals — but why in thunder do not the topgallantsails follow? The fellow is coming right under the fort. Guns. He salutes. Answer from the fort. Citizen Lallemont has agreed that no French vessel shall enter the port, even the English do not attempt it. But the son of a dog comes on. Send out boats, Comandatore Pizzamano. *Per Dio*, he is passing them! Touch off the cannon as a warning. One shot. Two. Some one is on the poop with a speaking-trumpet. "What ship is that?" "*Le Libérateur d'Italie. Le Capitaine Laugier. Marine de la République Française.*" "It is forbidden to enter the port, *Signor Capitano Laugier.*" "We intend to anchor outside." Do you! Then why not clew up those damned topgallantsails. My God! She is past the fort. She has slipped through the entrance; she is in the Lagoon. Her forefoot cuts the diamond water, she sheers her way through the calm colour reflections, her bow points

straight at the rose and violet city swimming under the light clouds of early afternoon. Shock! Shiver! Foul of a Venetian galley, by all that's holy. What beastly seamanship! The Venetians will not stand it, I tell you. Pop! Pop! Those are muskets, drop on them with cutlasses, *mes enfants.* Chop into the cursed foreigners. "*Non vogliamo forestieri qui.*" Boom! The cannon of Fort Sant' Andrea. Good guns, well pointed, the smoke from them draws a shade over the water. Down come the topgallant-sails. You have paid a price for your entrance, Captain Laugier, but it is not enough. "*Viva San Marco!*" Detestable voices, these Venetians. That cry is confusing. Puff! The smoke goes by. Three marines have fallen. The cannon fire at intervals of two minutes. Hot work under a burning sky. Hot work on a burning deck. The smoothness of the water is flecked with bits of wood. A dead body rolls overboard, and bobs up and down beside the ships.

A sailor slips from a yard, and is spiked on an upturned bayonet. Over the water comes the pealing of many bells. Captain Laugier is dead, and the city tolls his requiem. Strike your colours, beaten Frenchmen. Bronze cannot walk upon the sea. You have failed and succeeded, for upon your Captain's fallen body the bronze feet have found their bridge. Do you rejoice, old Arsenal? A captive ship towed up to you again! Ah, the cannon firing has brought the rain. Yes, and thunder too, and in the thunder a voice of bronze. The *Bucentoro* will not take the water this year. Cover up the brasses, *Arsenalotti*. Ascension Day is nothing to Venice now.

Yesterday this was matter for rejoicing, but today ... Get the best rowers, order relays of horses on the mainland, post hot foot to the Commissioners at Grätz. One ship is nothing, but if they send twenty!

What has the bronze General already said to the Commissioners. The Senate wonders, and wears itself out in speculation. They will give money, they will plunder the pockets of the populace to save Venice. Can a child save his toys when manhood is upon him? The century is old, already another lies in its arms. Month by month a new moon rises over Venice, but century by century! They cannot see, these Senators. They cannot hear the General cutting the Commissioners short in a sort of fury. "I wish no more Inquisition, no more Senate. I will be an Attila for Venice. This government is old; it must fall!" Pretty words from bronze to porcelain. A stain on a brave, new gospel. "Save Venice," the letter urges, and the Commissioners depart for Trieste. But the doors are locked. The General blocks his entrances. "I cannot receive you, Gentlemen, you and your Senate are disgusting to the French blood." A pantomime before a temple, with

a priest acting the part of chief comedian. Strange burlesque, arabesquing the characters of a creed. You think this man is a greedy conqueror. Go home, thinking. Your moment flutters off the calendar, your world dissolves and another takes its place. This is the cock-crow of ghosts. Slowly pass up the canal, slowly enter the Ducal Palace. Debate, everlastingly debate. And while you quibble the communication with the continent is cut.

He has declared war, the bronze General. What can be done? The little glass figures crack under the strain. Condulmer will not fight. Pesaro flees to Austria. So the measure awaits a vote. A grave Senate consulting a ballot-box as to whether it shall cut its throat. This is not suicide, but murder; this is not murder, but the turned leaf of an almanac. "Divide! Divide!" What is the writing on the other side? "*Viva la Libertà*," shouts General Salimbeni from a window. Stupid crowd, it will

not give a cheer. It is queer what an unconscionable objection people have to dying. "*Viva San Marco!*" shouts General Salimbeni. Ah, now you hear! Such a racket, and the old lion flag hoisted everywhere. But that was a rash thing to do. It brings the crash. They fight, fight for old Saint Mark, they smash, burn, demolish. Who wore the *tricolore?* Plunder their houses. No you don't, no selling us to foreigners. They cannot read, the people, they do not see that the print has changed. By dint of cannon you can stop them. Stop them suddenly like a clock dropped from a wall.

Venice! Venice! The star-wakes gleam and shatter in your still canals, and the great horses pace forward, vigorous, unconcerned, beautiful, treading your grief as they tread the passing winds.

The riot is over, but another may break out. A dead republic cannot control its citizens. General Baraguey d'Hilliers is at Mestre. His dragoons will keep order. Shame, nobles and abdicated Senate! But can one blame the inactivity of the dead? French dragoons in little boats. The 5th and 63rd of the line proceeding to Venice in forty little boats. Grenadiers embarked for a funeral. Soldiers cracking jokes, and steady oar-strokes, warping them over the water toward Venice. A dark city, scarcely a lamp is lit. A match-spark slits the darkness, a drummer is lighting his pipe. Ah, there are walls ahead. The dull bones of the dead. Water swashes against marble. They are in the canal, their voices echo from doors and porches. Forty boats, and the bobble of them washes the water step and step above its usual height on the stairways. "*C'est une église ça!*" "*Mais, oui, Bêta, tu pensais pourtant*

pas que tu entrais en France. Nous sommes dans une sale ville aristocratique, et je m'en fiche, moi!" Brave brigadier, spit into the canal, what else can a man of the new order do to show his enlightenment. Two regiments of seasoned soldiers, two regiments of free citizens, forty boat-loads of thinking men to goad a moribund nation into the millennium. The new century arriving with a flower in its button-hole, the *carmagnole* ousting the *furlana*. Perhaps — perhaps — but years pile up and then collapse. Will gaps start between one and another? Settle your gun-straps, 63rd of the line, we land here by the dim shine of a lantern held by a bombardier. Tier and tier the soldiers march through Venice. Their steps racket like the mallets of marble-cutters in the narrow *calli*, and the sound of them over bridges is the drum-beating of hard rain.

There are soldiers everywhere, Venice is stuffed with soldiers. They are at the Arsenal, on the

Rialto, at San Stefano, and four hundred stack muskets, and hang their bearskins on the top of them, in the middle of the Piazza.

Golden horses, the sound of violins is hushed, the pigeons who brush past you in the red and rising sunlight have just been perching on crossed bayonets. Set your faces to this army, advance toward them, paw the air over their heads. They do not observe you — yet. You are confounded with jewels, and leaves, and statues. You are a part of the great church, even though you stand poised to leave it, and already a sergeant has seen you. "*Tiens*," says he, "*voilà les quatre chevaux d'or. Ah, mais ils sont magnifiques! Et quelle drôle d'idée de les avoir montés sur la Cathédrale.*"

The century wanes, the moon-century is gnawed and eaten, but the feet of the great horses stand upon its fragments, full-tilted to an arrested advance, and

the green corroding on their sides is hidden in the glare of gold.

"For the honour and independence of the infant Cisalpine Republic, the affectionate and loving Republic of France orders and commands —"

What does she command? Precisely, that the new Government shall walk in solemn procession round the Piazza, and that a mass of thanksgiving shall be celebrated in Saint Mark's Church and the image of the Virgin exposed to the rejoicing congregation. Who would have supposed that Venetians could be so dumb. The acclamations seem mostly in the French tongue. Never mind, it takes more than a day to translate a creed into a new language. Liberty is a great prize, good Venetians, although it must be admitted that she appears in disguise for the moment. She wears a mask, that is all, and you should be accustomed to masks. The soldiers bask

in the warm sunshine, and doubtless the inhabitants bask in the sight of the soldiers, but they conceal their satisfaction very adroitly. Still, General Baraguey d'Hilliers has no doubt that it is there. This liberation of a free people is a famous exploit. He is a bit nettled at their apathy, for he has always heard that they were of a gay temperament. "*Sacré Bleu!* And we are giving them so much!"

Indeed, this giving is done with a magnificent generosity. It is exactly on Ascension Day that Bonaparte writes from Montebello: "Conformably to your desire, Citizens, I have ordered the municipalities of Padua and Treviso to allow the passage of the foodstuffs necessary to the provisionment of the town of Venice."

"Real and perpetual dominion," and now a boatload of food is a condescension! Pink and purple water, your little ripples jest at these emblazoned palaces, your waves chuckle down the long Rivas,

you reflect the new flag of Venice which even the Dey of Algiers refuses to respect, and patter your light heels upon it as on a dancing-floor. There will be no more use for the *Bucentoro*, of course. So rip off the gilding, pack up the mirrors, chop the timbers into firewood. This is good work for soldiers with nothing to do. There are other ships to be dismantled too, and some few seaworthy enough to send to the army at Corfu. But if they have taken away Ascension Day, the French will give Venice a new fête. Ah! and one so beautiful! Beat the drums, ring the church-bells, set up a Tree of Liberty in the Great Square, this fête is past telling. So writes the Citizen Arnault, from his room in the *Queen of England* inn. He bites his pen, he looks out on the little canal with its narrow bridge, he fusses with his watch-chain. It is not easy to write to the bronze General. He dips in the ink and starts again. "The people take no active part in what goes on here.

They have seen the lions fall without making any sign of joy." That certainly is queer. Perhaps Citizen Arnault did not hear that gondolier, who, when they chiselled out "*Pax tibi, Marce, evangelista meus*" on the lion's book, and chiselled in "*Diritti dell' uomo e del cittadino,*" exclaimed: "The lion has turned over a new leaf." Does that sound like grief? Certainly not, think the French soldiers, and yet the Doge's robes, the Golden Book, burn in silence, until a corporal strikes up the "*Marseillaise.*" They make a grand blaze too; why, the boatmen far off in the hazy Lagoon can hear the crackle of it snapping over the water. Then the columns! The columns produce a lovely effect, one all wound with *tricolore* flags and with this inscription: "To the French, regenerators of Italy, Venice grateful," on its front, and on the back, "Bonaparte." The other is not so gay, but most proper and desirable. It is hung with crêpe, and the letters read: "To the shade

of the victim of oligarchy, Venice sorrowful," and, "Laugier." To be sure there has been considerable excitement, and the great green lion has been thrown down and shattered in at least eighty fragments, but the soldiers did it. The populace were simply stolid and staring. Citizen Arnault fidgets in his chair. But other affairs march better. He has found the only copy of Anacharsis which is known to be in Venice; he is going to hunt for Homer, for he wants to put it with the Ossian of Cesarotti which he has already taken from the Library. Here his pen runs rapidly, he has an inspiration. "There are four superb horses which the Venetians took when, in company with the French, they sacked Constantinople. These horses are placed over the portal of the Ducal Church. Have not the French some right to claim them, or at least to accept them of Venetian gratitude?" The bronze General has an eye to a man, witness this really excellent plan. Fold your

letter, Citizen. Press your fob down upon the seal. You may feel proud as you ring for candles, no one will have hurt Venice more than you.

The blue night softens the broken top of the column in the Piazzetta where it juts against the sky. The violet night sifts shadows over the white, mounting angels of Saint Mark's Church; it throws an aureole of lilac over the star of Christ and melts it into the glimmering dome behind. But upon the horses it clashes with the glitter of steel. Blue striking gold, and together producing a white-heart fire. Cold, as in great fire, hard as in new-kindled fire, outlined as behind a flame which folds back upon itself in lack of fuel, the great horses stand. They strain forward, they recoil even when starting, they raise one foot and hold it lifted, and all about them the stones of the jewelled church writhe, and convolute, and glisten, and dash the

foam of their tendrils against the clear curve of the moulded flanks.

The Treaty of Campo Formio! A mask stripped off a Carnival figure, and behold, the sneering face of death! What of the creed the French were bringing the Venetians! Was it greed after all, or has a seed been sown? If so, the flowering will be long delayed. The French are leaving us, and almost we wish they would remain. For Austria! What does it matter that the *Bucentoro* is broken up; the lions from the Piræus loaded into a vessel; books, parchments, pictures, packed in travelling cases! What does anything matter! A gondolier snaps his fingers: "*Francese non tutti ladri, ma Buona-parte!*" Hush, my friend, that is a dangerous remark, for Madame Bonaparte has descended upon Venice in a whirlwind of laughter, might have made friends had she not been received in an overturned storehouse. But she stays

only three days, and the song of the gondoliers who row her away can scarcely be heard for the hammering they make, putting up an immense scaffolding in front of Saint Mark's Church. They have erected poles too, and tackle. It is an awful nuisance, for soldiers are not skilled in carpenter work, and no Venetian will lend a hand. A grand ship sails for Toulon as soon as the horses are on board.

Golden horses, at last you leave your pedestals, you swing in the blue-and-silver air, you paw the reflections flung by rippled water, and the starved pigeons whirl about you chattering. One — one — one — one! The tackle creaks, the little squeaks of the pigeons are sharp and pitiful. A gash in the front of the great Church. A blank window framing nothing. The leaves of the sculptures curl, the swirling angels mount steadily, the star of Christ is the pointed jet of a flame, but the horses drop —

drop — They descend slowly, they jerk, and stop, and start again, and one — one — one — one — they touch the pavement. Women throw shawls over their heads and weep; men pull off their caps and mutter prayers and imprecations. Then silently they form into a procession and march after the hand-carts, down to the quay, down to the waiting vessel. Slow feet following to a grave. Here is a sign, but hardly of joy. This is a march of mourning. Depart, vessel, draw out over the bright Lagoon, grow faint, vague, blur and disappear. The murder is accomplished. To-morrow come the Austrians.

Bonfires Burn Purple

Then the energy which peoples the Earth crystallized into a single man. And this man was Water, and Fire, and Flesh. His core had the strength of metal, and the hardness of metal was in his actions, and upon him the sun struck as upon polished metal. So he

went to and fro among the nations, gleaming as with jewels. Of himself were the monuments he erected, and his laws were engraved tablets of fairest bronze. But there grew a great terror among the lesser peoples of the Earth, and they ran hither and yon like the ants, they swarmed like beetles, and they saw themselves impotent, merely making tracks in sand. Now as speed is heat, so did this man soften with the haste of his going. For Fire is supreme even over metal, and the Fire in him overcame the strong metal, so that his limbs failed, and his brain was hot and molten. Then was he consumed, but those of his monuments which harboured not Fire, and were without spirit, and cold, these endured. In the midst of leaping flame, they kept their semblances, and turning many colours in heat, still they cooled as the Fire cooled. For metal is unassailable from without, only a spark in the mid-most circle can force a double action which pours it into Water, and volatilizes it into Air, and sifts it to ashes which are Earth. For

man can fashion effigies, but the spark of Life he can neither infuse nor control.

As a sharp sun this man passed across his century, and of the cenotaphs of his burning, some remain as a shadow of splendour in the streets of his city, but others have returned whence he gathered them, for the years of these are many and the touch of kings upon them is as the dropping of particles of dust.

Venice Again

Sunday evening, May 23, 1915. A beautiful Sunday evening with the Lagoon just going purple, and the angel on the tip of the new Campanile dissolved to a spurt of crocus-coloured flame. Up into the plum-green sky mount the angels of the Basilica of Saint Mark, their wings, curved up and feathered to the fragility of a blowing leaf, making incisive stabs of whiteness against the sky.

An organ moans in the great nave, and the high

voices of choristers float out through the open door and surge down the long Piazza. The chugging of a motor-boat breaks into the chant, swirls it, churns upon it, and fades to a distant pulsing down the Grand Canal. The Campanile angel goes suddenly crimson, pales to rose, dies out in lilac, and remains dark, almost invisible, until the starting of stars behind it gives it a new solidity in hiding them.

In the warm twilight, the little white tables of the Café Florian are like petals dropped from the rose of the moon. For a moment they are weird and magical, but the abrupt glare of electric lights touches them back into mere tables: mere tables, flecked with coffee-cups and liqueur-glasses; mere tables, crumpling the lower halves of newspapers with their hard edges; mere tables, where gesticulating arms rest their elbows, and ice-cream plates nearly meet disaster in the excitement of a heated discussion. Venice discusses. What will the Government do? Austria

has asked that her troops might cross over Italian territory, South of Switzerland, in order to attack the French frontier. Austria! "I tell you, Luigi, that alliance the Government made with the Central Powers was a ghastly blunder. You could never have got Italians to fight on the side of Austrians. Blood is thicker than ink, fortunately. But we are ready, thanks to Commandante Cadorna. It was a foregone conclusion, ever since we refused passage to their troops." "I saw Signor Colsanto, yesterday. He told me that the order had come from the General Board of Antiquities and Fine Arts to remove everything possible to Rome, and protect what can't be moved. He begins the work to-morrow." "He does! Well, that tells us. Here, Boy, Boy, give me a paper. Listen to that roar! There you are, *cinque centesimi*. Well, we're off, Luigi. It's declared. Italy at war with Austria again. Thank God, we've wiped off the stain of that abominable

treaty." With heads bared, the crowd stands, and shouts, and cheers, and the pigeons fleer away in frightened circles to the sculptured porticoes of the Basilica. The crowd bursts into a sweeping song. A great patriotic chorus. It echoes from side to side of the Piazza, it runs down the colonnades of the Procuratie like a splashing tide, it dashes upon the arched portals of Saint Mark's and flicks upward in jets of broken music. Wild, shooting, rolling music; vibrant, solemn, dedicated music; throbbing music flung out of loud-pounding hearts. The Piazza holds the sound of it and lifts it up as one raises an offering before an altar. Higher — higher — the song is lifted, it engulfs the four golden horses over the centre door of the church. The horses are as brazen cymbals crashing back the great song in a cadence of struck metal, the carven capitals are fluted reeds to this mighty anthem, the architraves bandy it to and fro in revolving canons of harmony. Up, up, spires

the song, and the mounting angels call it to one another in an ascending scale even to the star of fire on the topmost pinnacle which is the Christ, even into the distant sky where it curves up and over falling down to the four horizons, to the highest point of the aconite-blue sky, the sky of the Kingdom of Italy.

Garibaldi's Hymn! For war is declared and Italy has joined the Allies!

Soft night falling upon Venice. Summer night over the moon-city, the flower-city. *Fiore di Mare!* Garden of lights in the midst of dark waters, your star-blossoms will be quenched, the strings of your guitars will snap and slacken. Nights, you will gird on strange armour, and grow loud and strident. But now — The gilded horses shimmer above the portico of Saint Mark's! How still they are, and powerful. Pride, motion, activity set in a frozen patience.

Suddenly — Boom! A signal gun. Then immediately the shrill shriek of a steam whistle, and another, and whistles and whistles, from factories and boats, yawling, snarling, mewling, screeching, a cracked cacophony of horror.

Minutes — one — two — three — and the batteries of the Aerial-Guard Station begin to fire. Shells — red and black, white and grey — bellow, snap, and crash into the blue-black sky. A whirr — the Italian planes are rising. Their white centre lights throw a halo about them, and, tip and tip, a red light and a green, spark out to a great spread, closing together as the planes gain in altitude. Up they go, the red, white, and green circles underneath their wings and on either side of the fan-tails bright in the glow of the white centre light. Up, up, slanting in mounting circles. "Holy Mother of God! What is it?" Taubes over the city, flying at a great height,

flying in a wedge like a flight of wild geese. Boom! The anti-aircraft guns are flinging up strings of luminous balls. Range 10,000 feet, try 10,500. Loud detonations, echoing far over the Lagoon. The navigation lights of the Italian planes are a faint triangle of bright dots. They climb in deliberate spirals, up and up, up and up. They seem to hang. They hover without direction. Ah, there are the Taubes, specks dotting the beam of a search-light. One of them is banking. Two Italian machines dart up over him. He spins, round — round — top-whirling, sleeping in speed, to us below he seems stationary. Pup-pup-pup-pup-pup — machine-guns, clicking like distant typewriters, firing with indescribable rapidity. The Italian planes drop signal balloons, they hang in the air like suspended sky-rockets, they float down, amber balls, steadily burning. The ground guns answer, and white buds of smoke appear in the sky. They seem to blossom out of darkness, silver roses

beyond the silver shaft of the search-light. The air is broken with noise: thunder-drumming of cannon, sharp pocking of machine-guns, snap and crack of rifles. Above, the specks loop, and glide, and zig-zag. The spinning Taube nose-dives, recovers, and zums upward, topping its adversary. Another Taube swoops in over a Nieuport and wags its tail, spraying lead bullets into the Italian in a wide, wing-and-wing arc. The sky is bitten red with stinging shrapnel. Two machines charge head on, the Taube swerves and rams the right wing of the Nieuport. Flame! Flame leaping and dropping. A smear from zenith to — following it, the eye hits the shadow of a roof. Blackness. One poor devil gone, and the attacking plane is still airworthy though damaged. It wobbles out of the search-light and disappears, rocking. Two Taubes shake themselves free of the tangle, they glide down — down — all round them are ribbons of "flaming onions," they

avoid them and pass on down, close over the city, unscathed, so close you can see the black crosses on their wings with a glass. Rifles crack at them from roofs. Pooh! You might as well try to stop them with pea-shooters. They curve, turn, and hang up-wind. Small shells beat about them with a report like twanged harp-strings. "*Klar zum Werfen?*" "*Jawohl.*" "*Gut doch, werfen.*" Words cannot carry down thousands of feet, but the ominous hovering is a sort of speech. People wring their hands and clutch their throats, some cover their ears. Z-z-z-z-z! That whine would pierce any covering. The bomb has passed below the roofs. Nothing. A pause. Then a report, breaking the hearing, leaving only the apprehension of a great light and no sound. They have hit us! *Misericordia!* They have hit Venice! One — two — four — ten bombs. People sob and pray, the water lashes the Rivas as though there were a storm. Another machine falls, shooting down in

silence. It is not on fire, it merely falls. Then slowly the Taubes draw off. The search-light shifts, seeking them. The gun-fire is spaced more widely. Field-glasses fail to show even a speck. There is silence. The silence of a pulse which has stopped. But the people walk in the brightness of fire. Fire from the Rio della Tanna, from the Rio del Carmine, from the quarter of Santa Lucia. Bells peal in a fury, fire-boats hurry with forced engines along the canals. Water streams jet upon the fire; and, in the golden light, the glittering horses of Saint Mark's pace forward, silent, calm, determined in their advance, above the portal of the untouched church.

The night turns grey, and silver, and opens into a blue morning. Diamond roses sparkle on the Lagoon, but the people passing quickly through the Piazza are grim, and workmen sniff the smoky air as they fix ladders and arrange tools. Venice has tasted war. "*Evviva Italia!*"

City of soft colours, of amber and violet, you are turning grey-green, and grey-green are the uniforms of the troops who defend you. The Bersaglièri still wear their cocks' feathers, but they are green too, and black. Black as the guns mounted on pontoons among the Lagoons before Venice, green as the bundles of reeds camouflaging them from Austrian observation balloons. Drag up metre after metre of grey-green cloth, stretch it over the five golden domes of Saint Mark's Basilica. Hood their splendour in umbrella bags of cloth, so that not one glint shall answer the mocking shimmer of the moon. Barrows and barrows of nails for the wooden bastion of the Basilica, hods and hods of mortar and narrow bricks to cover the old mosaics of the lunettes. Cart-loads of tar and planking, and heaps, heaps, hills and mountains of sand — the Lido protecting Venice, as it has done for hundreds of years. They

shovel sand, scoop sand, pour sand, into bags and bags and bags. Thousands of bags piled against the bases of columns, rising in front of carved corners, blotting out altars, throttling the open points of arches. Porphyries, malachites, and jades are squarely boarded, pulpits and fonts disappear in swaddling bands. Why? The battle front is forty miles away in Friuli, and Venice is not a fortified town. Why? Answer, Reims! Bear witness, Ypres! Do they cover Venice without reason? Nietzsche was a German, still I believe they read him in Vienna. Blood and Iron! And is there not also Blood and Stone, Blood and Bronze, Blood and Canvas? "Kultur," Venetians, in the Rio del Carmine; there is no time to lose. Take down the great ceiling pictures in the Ducal Palace and wrap them on cylinders. Build a high trestle, and fashion little go-carts which draw with string.

Hush! They are coming — the four beautiful

horses. They rise in a whirl of disturbed pigeons. They float and descend. The people watch in silence as, one after another, they reach the ground. Across the tiles they step at last, each pulled in a go-cart; merry-go-round horses, detached and solitary, one foot raised, tramp over chequered stones, over chequered centuries. The merry-go-round of years has brought them full circle, for are they not returning to Rome?

For how long? Ask the guns embedded in the snow of glaciers; ask the rivers pierced from their beds, overflowing marshes and meadows, forming a new sea. Seek the answer in the faces of the Grenatieri Brigade, dying to a man, but halting the invaders. Demand it of the women and children fleeing the approach of a bitter army. Provoke the reply in the dryness of those eyes which gaze upon the wreck of Tiepolo's ceiling in the Church of the Scalzi. Yet not in Italy alone shall you find it. The ring

of searching must be widened, and France, England, Japan, and America, caught within its edge. Moons and moons, and seas seamed with vessels. Needles stitching the cloth of peace to choke the cannon of war.

The boat draws away from the Riva. The great bronze horses mingle their outlines with the distant mountains. Dim gold, subdued green-gold, flashing faintly to the faint, bright peaks above them. Granite and metal, earth over water. Down the canal, old, beautiful horses, pride of Venice, of Constantinople, of Rome. Wars bite you with their little flames and pass away, but roses and oleanders strew their petals before your going, and you move like a constellation in a space of crimson stars.

So the horses float along the canal, between barred and shuttered palaces, splendid against marble walls in the fire of the sun.

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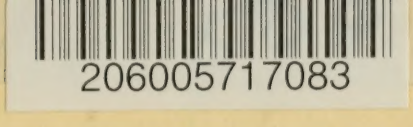

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